

Rebuilding trust in Australian aid through transparency

by Anne Aly

13 August 2025



The Australian Defence Force supports Australia's response to the Government of Vanuatu's request for assistance following an earthquake which struck Port Vila in 2024

Photo Credit: DFAT/CPL Sam Price

Transparency matters.

It matters to the Australian public, who want to know their tax dollars are being spent responsibly, accountably and effectively. It matters to our partners in our region, who expect honesty and openness in how we work together. And it matters for our national interest because transparency builds trust and respect — and trust and respect in our international partnerships are prerequisites for stability, peace and prosperity in our region.

As Australia's Minister for International Development, I believe transparency is more than a principle. It underpins our integrity and credibility internationally. It is a tool for better development. It enables learning, strengthens partnerships and ensures our investments are delivering results for those who need them most.

We haven't always met expectations. Unfortunately, we saw a considerable decline in the transparency of Australia's development program under previous governments.

The Albanese Government committed to rebuild Australia's international development program. And we have acted on it.

In 2023, we launched our International Development Policy. Transparency is now a central pillar of how we deliver our development cooperation.

Last year, we launched [AusDevPortal](#), a new online platform that, for the first time, brings together comprehensive information on where and how every single Australian-funded development program is delivered. Anyone can now easily access detailed data on budgets, sectors and geographic allocations, and the portal includes performance and results data, as well as case studies to illustrate the impact of our investments.

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We've backed this up with regular evaluations so evidence can drive how we improve programs, make decisions and stay accountable. We've also introduced an annual *Performance of Australian Development Cooperation Report* which gives a clearer picture of how our development efforts are tracking against the measurable targets in Australia's *International Development Performance And Delivery Framework*.

These steps reflect a broader ambition: to build a transparent development program that is fit for purpose in a rapidly changing world. One that is accountable, delivers measurable outcomes, earns the confidence of the public and strengthens Australia's relationships in the Indo-Pacific region.

That's why I welcome the release of the *2025 Australian Aid Transparency Audit* by the ANU's Development Policy Centre. This independent review is a vital accountability mechanism. It supports us to go further. And it provides an evidence-based perspective that helps sharpen our approach and identify gaps to close.

The audit rightly recognises the strong progress made over the past three years. I am particularly pleased with the audit's central finding that "in 2025, Australian aid transparency improved considerably in a range of ways". This incredible progress reflects the work of many across DFAT and the development sector who are committed to open, high-quality and accountable development cooperation.

We have come a long way. I am proud of the solid foundations we have built. But we are not done.

The audit highlights areas for improvement and identifies where data and documentation gaps persist. These are areas we are already working on. We are investing in improved systems, enhancing our processes and building staff capability.

We are also thinking about the next frontier: how to make transparency more meaningful, not just more technical.

I have seen first-hand the transformational outcomes Australia's development cooperation is delivering in our region. Our development program changes lives. We have a lot to be proud of. But we need to better tell the stories about the impacts of our development program and to back these up with a robust and accessible evidence base.

This is especially important in today's context. Around the world, trust in public institutions is at a low. Rising disinformation is fuelling division and scepticism. The global development landscape is more contested and official development

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assistance is under growing pressure. In this environment, transparency is an increasingly valuable strategic asset as well as core to ensuring good governance continues under this government.

I am committed to a development program which is not only effective but trusted. One that is open to scrutiny, celebrates its results, and is accountable to the people it serves, at home and abroad. And I know the Australian community is too.

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Link: <https://devpolicy.org/rebuilding-trust-in-australian-aid-through-transparency-20250813/>