

## Bishop-Carr debate shows key points of difference on aid

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While foreign aid didn't rate a mention in last night's televised debate between Rudd and Abbott, it did at least score some attention in last week's [debate](#) between Julie Bishop and Bob Carr at the Lowy Institute. Though not as much as it should have—only a couple of minutes from an hour-long conversation.

In their mentions of aid, Carr tended to focus on Asia (with one mention of the Solomons) and said very little on strategic approach, while Bishop focused on building relationships in the Pacific that go beyond aid and becoming a 'partner of choice' for Pacific nations. Bishop also reiterated the Coalition plan to make aid for trade a cornerstone of their policy (she had mentioned this earlier at a speech on aid for trade in Adelaide in July, [summarised here](#)).

There were no questions directly on aid (and the speakers spent the majority of their time addressing questions), but both addressed aid in their closing remarks. Bishop highlighted aid and the Pacific as two of the three areas where the Coalition would have a different approach to Labor in foreign affairs (the third was a focus on trade).

We've compiled their comments on aid below.

### Julie Bishop

- 'The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will be the lead agency in coordinating our international engagement across all levels and all departments, so that our efforts in trade, investment, immigration, tourism, education, foreign aid, for example, will all be consistent and aligned to our strategic goals.'
- 'We will make Aid for Trade a cornerstone of our aid policy.'
- 'We will put in place performance benchmarks against which our aid budget... will be judged, to ensure that we have the most efficient and the most effective use of our aid budget and the best value for money, not only for our taxpayers but for the recipients.'
- 'I want us to be the partner of choice for countries in the Pacific... I believe it's time for us to change the nature of our engagement in the Pacific, to get away from the stereotypes of aid donor and aid recipients and have true economic partnerships based on mutual respect and understanding with the nations of the Pacific.'
- 'We need to have greater recognition in our region of what we actually do. I was at Samoa's independence celebrations recently and you would have thought that the greatest aid donor to Samoa was the United States, then China, followed by Israel. I couldn't see a reference to Australia anywhere. We need to have a much greater effort at promoting our influence, our friendships and our connections in the Pacific.'

### Bob Carr

- 'Our biggest concentration of diplomats in the world is not in Washington. It's in Jakarta. And our aid program is the biggest, and it's relevant. I've been to madrasas that are being built. Mainstream Islam in line with the policy of the Government of Indonesia being taught as opposed to Saudi madrasas teaching their version, because of thoughtful Australian aid backing the priorities of the President and his Government.'
- 'You've got to be careful about linking aid to trade. When we say we will wipe out malaria in the Solomon Islands by 2020, it's got nothing to do with trade. It's got everything to do with rescuing people from a devastated life.'
- 'When we say we're going to train midwives in Cambodia... it's Australia doing the right thing.'

Australia doing the right thing, because we're a decent country with decent values and our behaviour overseas reflects that character.'

- '...aid to Palestine has been criticised. I have been quizzed in the Senate about it, and there's no doubt that that would be withdrawn [under Coalition]'
- 'Family planning - I noticed that one big part of our foreign aid program is to rescue women and girls by providing support for family planning. It was barely there under John Howard because of a deal he struck with Brian Harradine in the Senate. We've lifted it. I'm proud to say, as Foreign Minister, I got it up to \$50 million, a steep increase to help women and girls in developing countries. And yet we faced a resolution in the Senate where 10 shadow ministers... said Australia should not be supporting family aid programs. That's a big difference and it's a big feature of our foreign aid.'