

Newsletter: Annual report | 2015 aid cuts | SWP reforms | A third-order aid evaluation

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2014 Annual Report

Our 2014 Annual Report is [now available](#). From our PNG service delivery report with NRI, to supporting the establishment of the Case Management Centre in Lae, and securing new support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Australian aid program, it was another big year for our Centre. Thank you to all those who continue to support our efforts to provide sound analysis to advance good public policy here and in the region through reading the blog, attending events and collaborating on and sharing our work.

Getting ready for the 2015 aid budget

The budget will be handed down on Tuesday 12 May, and once again we'll be holding our Annual Aid Budget Breakfast the following morning—we'll open registrations soon.

With a billion dollars to be cut from aid, there will no doubt be much tension in the air in the lead up for the development community. In a blog post last week, Terence Wood [looked at one scenario](#) for making the cuts in order to inflict the least pain on countries that are more dependent on aid. Robin Davies earlier [outlined his thoughts on where](#) the cuts should fall. Both Robin and Terence agree that, if \$1 billion must be found, aid to Indonesia should be cut much more than PNG: Robin argues that aid to Indonesia should be more than halved, while PNG is cut by 10%. Terence is slightly more moderate, but still concludes that aid to Indonesia should be cut by just over a third, and aid to PNG virtually not at all.

SWP reforms

It's not only the academics who have good ideas. Over the last couple of weeks, we've published a series of blogs by two employers (one farmer, one recruiter) of workers under the Seasonal Worker Program. They are both strong supporters of the scheme, but they have lots of suggestions for how it could be improved. Grant Owen of Owen Pacific Workforce [had three main points](#): don't require employers to pay super (which gets refunded to the worker minus tax on departure); remove the requirement on the employer to cover travel costs; and abolish labour market testing. Susan Jenkin of Ironbark Citrus agreed with these points, and had [several more suggestions](#) to reduce the costs, risk and administrative burden faced by employers.

The ongoing problem with the SWP is the lack of employer demand. If we want the scheme to grow, these views should be heeded.

A third-order evaluation

[In a recent blog](#) Robin Davies critiques the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) [evaluation of development research](#) released last month. According to Robin, the evaluation asks the wrong question. What is really important is whether Australia is funding good development research. Unfortunately, the evaluation focuses on whether AusAID (or DFAT) itself uses the research it funds. Since much of the research is, rightly, not intended for aid managers, this is, as Robin puts it, a third-order question.

For more discussion of this and other Australian aid evaluations (recent releases are on Syria and service delivery; and there's also the annual aid report card) we'll be holding our annual evaluation forum with ODE on Wednesday 29 April. Save the date.

Mari Pangestu: Third Harold Mitchell Development Policy Lecture

Last night, we hosted the 2015 Harold Mitchell Development Policy Annual Lecture presented by Professor Mari Pangestu. Professor Pangestu spoke to a packed audience on "The new economy and development: an Indonesian perspective". She also discussed some of the recent challenges in the Australia-Indonesia relationship with [ABC's The World](#), and [Radio National Drive](#). We'll be bringing you the podcast soon.

PNG Update call for papers extended

Our annual [PNG Update](#) in conjunction with UPNG School of Business Administration will be held in Port Moresby on 18–19 June. The deadline for papers has been extended to Tuesday 31 March.

The PNG Update, which recommenced at UPNG last year after a gap of some years, is the premier forum for the discussion of research and analysis relating to contemporary economic and public policy issues in PNG.

More details on how to submit an abstract are [available here](#).

Blog highlights

Dame Meg Taylor [on regionalism and gender](#).

DFAT [is not Procter & Gamble](#).

Are aid agencies expecting recipients [to volunteer too much of their time?](#)

On the blog

[Vilu War Museum: tourism in Solomon Islands](#) by Matthew Dornan

[Volunteering an opinion](#) by Melissa Demian and Gordon Peake

[Reforming the Seasonal Worker Program: suggestions from an employer](#) by Susan Jenkin

[Regionalism, sub-regionalism and women's empowerment: an interview with Dame Meg Taylor](#) by Meg Taylor and Tess Newton Cain

[Issues with the Seasonal Worker Program: an employer's perspective](#) by Susan Jenkin

[Benefits of the Seasonal Worker Program: an employer's perspective](#) by Susan Jenkin

[Missing, one kangaroo with crossbones: ODE evaluates DFAT's support for development research](#) by Robin Davies

[Australia's billion-dollar aid cut: where to cut a billion dollars in a hurry](#) by Terence Wood

[Snakes and ladders: development NGOs in tough times](#) by Jonathan Pryke and Stephen Howes

In brief

[Weekend links: communicating aid, bitcoin, corporate tyranny and inverting township tours](#)

[A virtual trip down memory lane: accessing AusAID's old website](#)

[UK locks 0.7% aid commitment in law](#)

[Two new NRI scoping studies](#)

[What aid workers think of 'what journalists really think'](#)

[Labor promises to make aid volume commitment](#)

[Weekend reading and listening: WHO's woes, IMF and Ebola, and happiness](#)

[NRI seeks consultants for research on SOEs](#)

[Jo Chandler on Manus](#)

This is the fortnightly newsletter of the [Development Policy Centre](#) at Crawford School of Public Policy, The Australian National University, published every second Friday.