

Rudd appoints Minister for International Development

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Kevin Rudd has appointed Western Australia MP Melissa Parke as the Minister for International Development as part of his [new look government](#) after dramatically re-taking the Prime Ministerial reins last week.

The move is significant -- it elevates aid and development to a ministry rather than a parliamentary secretary position for the first time since Gordon Bilney was Minister for Development Cooperation and Pacific Affairs from 1993 to 1996. As with Bilney, Parke will not be in the cabinet.

Rudd's move is straight out of the Coalition playbook. The Coalition went into the last elections [promising](#) a Minister for International Development.

While many, including the authors of the 2011 Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness, have argued against having an "aid minister" on the grounds that he or she would not be in Cabinet, the huge growth in the size of the aid program is a strong argument in the opposite direction: one noted by Devpolicy's Stephen Howes in his endorsement of the Coalition position in his recent Canberra Times [article](#). Foreign Minister Carr is widely reported not to have taken an active interest in aid policy.

How the decision will play out in practice, and how Parke and Carr will relate to each other, remains to be seen. No details of the division of responsibility between them have yet been made public.

Parke, while new to such a senior position in the party, certainly [appears](#) to have suitable experience to take on the role. She served as a lawyer in the United Nations in Kosovo, Gaza, Beirut and New York from 1999-2007 and has a strong interest in human rights and international affairs.

She [spoke out strongly](#) on the diversion of aid funds to cover domestic asylum seeker costs last year. She also [took on](#) the "charity begins at home" arguments, challenging the claims made in early 2011 that foreign aid should be cut to support the response to the Queensland floods.

Elsewhere in the shake-up, Richard Marles has been elevated to Minister for Trade, which could be good news for the Pacific. During his stint as Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, Marles was well-regarded for building his relations in the region.

Senator Matt Thistlethwaite will remain in the Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs role, following his elevation to the position after the last (failed) Labor leadership coup earlier this year.