

Senate agrees to inquiry into aid cuts

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An inquiry into cuts to the growth of the aid program and the integration of AusAID into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) was agreed to by the Senate on Monday.

Labor Senator Ursula Stephens [moved](#) for the inquiry, which will be carried out by the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee.

The inquiry will examine Australia's international development and overseas assistance program in light of the changes being made by the Coalition Government, with the committee to report back to the Senate by March 20, 2014.

The proposed Terms of Reference for the inquiry call for it to examine: "Australia's ability to deliver aid against stated policy objectives and international commitments; Australia's ability to maintain its international development priorities including sectoral, regional, bilateral and multilateral international relationships; the integration of AusAID into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the freeze in international development assistance funding; any unintended consequences of these changes; and any other related matters."

In an interview with [the ABC](#) last week, Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Tanya Plibersek expressed her support for an inquiry and said that she was worried the cuts would particularly affect gender and disability programs.

Details about the submissions process for the inquiry are [not yet available](#).

At Devpolicy, we have been [advocating](#) for more parliamentary scrutiny of the aid program and a dedicated parliamentary committee or subcommittee on aid.