

Pre-budget Submission 2017-18

From: Garth Luke

Re: Overseas aid

Australia is one of the world's wealthiest countries. In contrast Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) levels have fallen to the lowest level ever as a share of GNI. Our ODA is only around half of the current average donor country effort (<http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/ODA-2015-detailed-summary.pdf>).

This is despite the continuing urgent need for additional development assistance in health, basic education and climate change adaption amongst other areas. For example despite significant reductions in HIV related deaths over 1 million people are still dying from AIDS each year. Access to additional aid funding is the single biggest barrier to preventing these deaths (http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2015/june/20150625_PR_Lancet).

The current tight budget situation in Australia is the result of political decisions about funding and expenditure and is not the result of natural forces outside of our control. Australia has one of the lowest levels of government revenue of all advanced economies. We also currently spend billions of dollars each year on dubious policies such as negative gearing of properties, concessional capital gains taxes and superannuation support for the most wealthy Australians. We could redirect some of these funds to provide our fair share of international aid and save the lives of many people. It is time for the Australian Parliament to live up to Australian values and to give our fair share of support to assisting the most vulnerable people in the world.

We also need to ensure that Australia does not have a structural budget deficit which prevents us from meeting our on-going needs to the poor in Australia and elsewhere. This requires adequate levels of revenue and more efficient government spending focussed on those who need it most. There should be a three yearly public review of budget revenue and expenditure to help ensure that the Commonwealth budget is maintained generally in balance.