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**'DON'T LET-UP ON GLOBAL POVERTY REDUCTION', SAYS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY  
IN UNITED MESSAGE TO PARLIAMENT**

Over two hundred Australians from across the country will descend on Parliament House on Monday to share their concern for the world's poor, oppressed, and displaced.

Led by Tim Costello, 80 face-to-face meetings with the nation's politicians will be held as a part of the *Voices for Justice* Conference, hosted by Micah Australia.

Only days away from the Government's Mid-Year Economic Fiscal Outlook Tim Costello, Executive Director of Micah Australia, said it was a unique moment to unite Christians and bring a message to Canberra that Australia's efforts to reduce global poverty must not let up.

"In the geopolitical competition for the Pacific, we must ensure poverty reduction is not lost. We must retain our focus on improving the lives of our Pacific friends and neighbours."

"After such great strides of progress, it's almost unbelievable that we have seen a resurgence of the things we were beating in our region. After being polio-free, we have seen a resurgence of polio in Papua New Guinea and a nine-fold increase of malaria infections. We must stop this backslide."

"The recent announcement that part of the \$2bn infrastructure fund for the Pacific will come at the cost of the existing grants-based aid program is deeply concerning. We can't turn our backs on those who most benefit from life-saving initiatives like immunisations, basic health services and WASH programs that Australia has a strong track-record of delivering."

Mr Costello also said with MYEFO likely to announce a predicted return to surplus, this would leave no excuses for our slashed aid budget.

"For years politicians on both sides have promised to rebuild Australian Aid once the surplus was regained. With a strong MYEFO likely to be presented, we are here to say, 'there are no more excuses'."

"We are meeting with parties across the political divide to ensure Australia's aid is compassionate and in line with our understanding of ourselves as a nation that looks after those doing it tough. It's time to be generous again."

In the lead up to the next federal election, participants will call on all major parties to step up in caring for the most vulnerable citizens of the world, by advocating for Australia to return to the top half of rich country aid donors by the end of the next parliamentary term. With aid currently at 0.23% GNI, its lowest ever level, this would mean rebuilding the aid program to 0.33% of GNI in the next 6 years, starting with a minimum increase to the aid program of 10% per year.

Mr Costello said there are representatives from every major church denomination at the *Voices for Justice* conference.

“Social justice is at the heart of our mission as the Church, and we believe at the core of who we are as Australians. In a world quickly dividing to the left and to the right, as Christians we believe we are called to go deeper.”

As part of the two days in Canberra, participants will join politicians for an event on the lawns of Parliament House on Monday morning, celebrating the progress that has been made to end extreme poverty.

Matt Darvas, Campaign Director, said it was important to stop and celebrate global progress, while looking ahead to the work still to be done.

“Every day, there are 20,000 less children dying compared to 1990. Australian aid has been part of that story, and we have been remarkably proud of our contribution, made possible through the joint efforts of governments, NGO’s, churches and more.

“We are here to celebrate that progress, but also to ensure that progress doesn’t stop.”

**Available for Interview:**

Tim Costello – Executive Director Micah Australia

Matt Darvas - Campaign Director Micah Australia

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Micah Australia is a coalition of Australia's largest Christian non-government organisations raising a powerful voice for justice and a world free from poverty.

[www.micahaustralia.org](http://www.micahaustralia.org)

