

Date of Issue: 13/03/2019

### Tim Costello welcomes strong vision for Aid outlined by ALP

Tim Costello, Micah Australia's Executive Director, has welcomed Labor's clear vision for Australian aid, as outlined by Senator Wong, including boosted funding to the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

"Today we welcome the reaffirmed commitment by Labor in rebuilding our shamefully low levels of Aid and call on the Coalition to restore bipartisanship by matching a reprioritisation of Aid in their election commitments," said Tim Costello.

"It is disappointing that the Coalition is yet to outline any concrete plan to restore aid. This is despite the talk of their aspirations to increase aid once the budget was back in surplus."

"With the recent MYEFO showing we are on track for a return to surplus in 2019-2020, there are no more excuses."

Mr Costello said there had been momentum building on this issue for some time, especially within the Australian Church, with many pastors and church leaders, asking the question of our politicians - *'What does our aid budget at its least generous level ever, say about who we are becoming as a nation?'*

"As little as two weeks ago, 16 Pastors from the electorate of Kooyong, which we know is becoming a key battleground, went with Micah to meet with Treasurer Josh Frydenberg to outline their own vision and moral concern for the state of the Australian aid budget.

"Only last December Micah took 200 Christians to Parliament to advocate for the world's poor. And in September, just four weeks after he was announced as PM, women Christian leaders from across Australia had the opportunity to speak with the Prime Minister about their desire to see the aid budget restored."

"The question we are asking is really - how did we become so cruel as a nation? What will it take for us to return to generosity and compassion?"

Mr Costello said he entirely agreed with Senator Wong's call for those who believe in a generous Australia to *'push back and articulate why Australia's international development program matters.'*

"It's on all of us to articulate to the public the multifaceted benefits of the aid program and call out this nonsense talk sets the poor in our own backyard against the poor overseas, when we know that we are both capable and called to help both."

"I'm personally tiring of facing the constant onslaught of the nationalist calls to cut aid entirely, which are completely short-sighted and unproductive with our best interests as a nation."

"Such vitriolic cries by those leaders and media commentators - who purport to be defending the rights and needs of our struggling Australians - may actually end up doing more harm than good for those Australians, if we consider the benefits aid brings our nation in terms of increased trade, prosperity, health and security."

"Take the benefits of aid on trade alone, where economic modelling from The Australian National University (ANU) has found that every additional \$1 spent on Australian foreign aid in Asia has resulted in \$7.10 in Australian exports."

"We need strong moral leadership on both side of politics, because not only is aid the right thing to do, it's also the smart thing to do."

Media Contact: Beck Wilesmith | 0403 569 773 | [beck.wilesmith@micahaustralia.org](mailto:beck.wilesmith@micahaustralia.org)

Micah Australia is a coalition of churches and Christian organisations raising a powerful voice for justice and a world free from poverty.

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

