



12 December 2019

The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Treasurer
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer

2020-21 Federal Budget Submission

Thank you for the Australian Government's most recent contributions to the Global Fund to Fight HIV Aids, TB and Malaria and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. These programs are saving lives, and in the case of polio, may see us eradicate the second disease in human history.

In this spirit, I am writing to implore you to not reduce Australia's overseas development assistance contribution (ODA) (or foreign aid) in the 2020-21 Federal Budget.

We truly won the lottery of birth to be born in Australia. Our region is facing serious challenges, making Australia's leadership and investment more important than ever.

2020 marks ten years to go until the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals deadline. Poverty has halved over the last thirty years, but when you look closely at the data, poverty is rising in the 59 poorest countries, including in our neighbourhood of Papua New Guinea. The time to act and stand up for the vulnerable is now.

Global Citizen is proudly a non-partisan organisation, but when I reflect upon my own values and the values I'd want from our government, it aligns with the great Liberal principles of freedom, opportunity, the rule of law and free enterprise. I don't want that just for Australians; I want it for all humanity. We aren't just citizens of our country but the world. The Liberal Party's policy platform tells the freedom story:

Freedom can only be meaningful if individuals have the opportunity to participate, to achieve and to develop their talents. Respect for the individual implies tolerance of others. This is why Liberalism is the enemy of privilege, sectional interests and narrow prejudice.¹

The story of freedom is also shared fundamentally by Global Citizen. Freedom and empowerment are the most central cornerstones to ensuring all people can one day enjoy the opportunities we as Australians enjoy every day. This leads me to ask how is it possible that access to basic water and sanitation, life-saving vaccines, basic health care, food and education is not available to many and yet we aren't motivated to take serious, urgent action? We have solutions to these problems, and

¹ Liberal Party of Australia, Federal Party Platform, <https://cdn.liberal.org.au/pdf/FederalPlatform.pdf>

Australia has the resources to contribute financially to this through the ODA budget. Australia spends less than 1% of its budget on ODA and just 0.21% of GNI. We can do better.

Liberal Governments have a long history of investing in international programs that align with Australian values; thus ensuring a safer, more secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. Investing in ODA has been a critical part of this legacy. Indeed it was the Howard Government that took bold steps to lift ODA in 2005 when the budget returned to surplus. The budget increased by 30% in real terms and the government didn't stop there, it announced a long-term plan to lift foreign aid to \$4 billion by 2010. However, nine years on Australia's ODA commitments has dropped to the 2010 target.

We understand that Australia faces significant domestic challenges and some in the Parliament seek a more inward-looking Australia because of that. It is easy to rationalise away our international obligations in times like these. Still, it remains true that we can both meet our challenges domestically and be a generous leader in our region. It will require leadership as seen in the United Kingdom where both major parties legislated 0.7% of Gross National Income to ODA.

Australia can increase its contribution and play a more active role in the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, such an aspiration has never been more critical. That's why I am asking you as our Treasurer to urgently halt the decline of ODA and commit to a long-term bipartisan increase. The effective use of aid, fair trade and good governance are essential to ending extreme poverty. Aid is not a handout but a critical investment in healthy and educated communities who can fully participate in a sustainable economy.

In the short-term, we believe it is critical that upcoming global health and education replenishments are met with an increase in the ODA funding profile. In particular, we are seeking your support for Australia's contribution to and leadership at the Gavi the Vaccine Alliance replenishment due in June 2020. With outbreaks of measles and the threat of disease increasing, especially in the Pacific, Gavi will be a critical investment for Australia. Disease knows no border, and so we must do all we can to contribute to the global fight to ensure every last child receives access to vaccines. Australia coming to the table with a new pledge of more than \$250 million over five years will be a true example of good, effective aid and bold global leadership.

If you require further information or wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0402 206 771 or via email at sarah.meredith@globalcitizen.org. I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Meredith
Country Director, Global Citizen Australia