

The new government and aid: our analysis

By Ashlee Betteridge
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A new government always brings change, including to the aid program.

The Coalition's announcement less than 48 hours before the election that it would be holding aid flat after inflation at slightly below last year's level came as a surprise to many, including us. The additional surprise move to integrate AusAID into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, amid a wider shake-up of the public service, has also raised many questions about Australian aid and its future priorities.

The decision brings to an end a decade of aid expansion. We've focused particularly on the decision to cut \$656 million from this year's budget, below last year's level even before inflation. Within-year cuts of this magnitude are unprecedented; Robin Davies [argues](#) that cuts of this order within the current year will take the aid program from expansion to crisis. Stephen Howes [suggests](#) that with some parts of the aid program committed or protected, other parts will have to be cut by up to 20% on average.

While information is still limited on what an 'integration' into DFAT really means for AusAID, Robin Davies has also [written](#) on how it should be implemented to minimise damage to the aid program.

Over time, we'll be examining the longer-term implications of this shift. Ben Day has [started](#) this discussion arguing that Australia is now embarking on an aid course charted by New Zealand, Canada and the Netherlands, all of whom have cut aid and redefined its objective in more commercial terms. Terence Wood and Joanna Spratt have also provided [a Kiwi perspective](#).

We've compiled the links to our analysis and our comments in the media below.

Blogs

[Felled before forty: the once and future AusAID](#) by Robin Davies.

[The future of AusAID: bend it, don't break it](#) by Robin Davies.

[AusAID staffing: how low could it go?](#) by Robin Davies.

[AusAID into DFAT: opportunity not threat](#) by Brian Doolan.

[Lead Australian development from the top?](#) By Tim McMinn.

[Back to the future? The split personality of Australian aid](#) by Jack Corbett and Sinclair Dinnen.

[More transparent, open and effective: Julie Bishop on Australian aid](#) by Stephen Howes and Ashlee Betteridge.

[Whither Australian aid?](#) by Terence Wood and Joanna Spratt.

[Purposeful and methodical? Not in relation to aid](#) by Stephen Howes.

[From expansion to crisis in Australian aid: reflections on the Coalition's aid cuts](#) by Robin Davies.

[A new journey on a worn path? The aid cuts in context](#) by Benjamin Day.

[Don't mention aid: what's unsaid in Australia's economic diplomacy](#) by Benjamin Day.

[Parsing the overall aid objective: a critique and a suggestion](#) by Stephen Howes.

In Brief

[Principles released for AusAID's \(deep\) reintegration into DFAT](#) by Ashlee Betteridge and Stephen Howes.

[Australia's \\$5 billion aid program: 'most generous', 'above average' or what?](#) by Robin Davies.

[No reason for AusAID-DFAT merger: Plibersek](#) by Ashlee Betteridge.

[AusAID no more? Abbott announces aid agency to be integrated into DFAT](#) by Robin Davies and Ashlee Betteridge.

[Abbott announces ministry: no room for aid or the Pacific?](#) by Ashlee Betteridge.

[Will there actually be an aid minister under Abbott?](#) by Ashlee Betteridge and Robin Davies.

[The region reacts on aid cuts and the new PM](#) by Ashlee Betteridge.

[Coalition releases policy \(fragment\) on aid](#) by Ashlee Betteridge and Robin Davies.

[Aid in 2016-17 to be back at 2012-13 levels under Coalition plan](#) by Stephen Howes.

Related media appearances

[AusAID staffing: how low could it go?](#) - PSNews, 29 October.

[Bending AusAID or breaking it?](#) - Canberra Times, 3 October.

- [PNG, Indonesia speak out about reintegration](#) - The Australian, 20 September.
- [Robin Davies: AusAID merged with DFAT](#) - Fairfax Breaking Politics, 19 September.
- [Stephen Howes on PNG survey, AusAID changes](#) - Radio Australia, 19 September.
- [Aid not trade warning over AusAID shakeup](#) - Radio National AM, 19 September.
- [Restructure raise concerns over Australia's foreign aid commitments](#) - Newline with Jim Middleton, Australia Network, 18 September.
- [Unravelling foreign aid](#) - ABC Nightlife with Tony Delroy, 18 September.
- [Pacific concerned that Australia's aid cuts will hit those most in need](#) - Radio New Zealand International, 12 September.
- [Coalition win means significant cuts to Australia's aid budget](#) - ABC Radio Australia, 9 September 2013.
- [Under new management, Australia's aid program set for more modest course](#) - Devex, 9 September 2013.
- [Coalition cuts to aid 'increase risk of hardline Islamists'](#) - Sydney Morning Herald, 6 September 2013.
- [The Conjuring Trick: Borrowing overseas and then sending it back as foreign aid](#) - Polifact.com.au, 6 September, 2013.
- [Australian Coalition's foreign aid cuts slammed](#) - ABC News, 6 September, 2013.
- [Academic says Coalition's budget is policy on the run](#) - Radio Australia, 6 September, 2013.
- [Foreign aid 'not ATM for parties'](#) - The Australian, September 6, 2013.
- [Aid cuts, 'stop the boats' dividend underpin Joe Hockey's \\$42bn savings](#) - The Australian, September 6, 2013.
- [Election 2013 live: Coalition releases its costings - as it happened](#) - The Guardian, September 5, 2013.
- [Coalition announces cuts to foreign aid](#) - Lowy Interpreter, September 5, 2013.

About the author/s

Ashlee Betteridge

Ashlee Betteridge was the Manager of the Development Policy Centre until April 2021. She

was previously a Research Officer at the centre from 2013-2017. A former journalist, she holds a Master of Public Policy (Development Policy) from ANU and has development experience in Indonesia and Timor-Leste. She now has her own consultancy, Better Things Consulting, and works across several large projects with managing contractors.

Link: <https://devpolicy.org/the-new-government-and-aid-our-analysis-20130917-1/>

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