# DEVPOLICYBLOG

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By Jonathan Pryke
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**AusAID's PNG HIV response criticized**

The Office of Development Effectiveness has released its latest evaluation, this time of the Australian aid program's contribution to the national HIV response in PNG, 2006-2010. AusAID has invested some $250 million in the response to HIV. But, according to the evaluation, "there is little evidence that AusAID's support for process and expansion of services has translated into measurable impact on the spread of the HIV epidemic." Part of this is lack of data, but "the fact that the rate of new sexually transmitted infections has not declined indicates that sexual behaviour change is very limited or not occurring at all in many places." AusAID's management response [pdf] disputes that their spending has not achieved results, but doesn't challenge the finding concerning sexually transmitted diseases.

**Regional processing and aid**

Australia has recently signed Memorandum of Understandings with both Nauru (available here) and Papua New Guinea (available here) for the establishment of regional processing centres under a new government policy (transcript of press conference here). While the Nauru MoU does not mention aid, the PNG MoU states that Australia will develop "a package of assistance focused on Manus Province and other bilateral cooperation" in addition to the current package.  Both MOUs commit to keep processing times short, contrary to the 'no advantage' rule espoused by the Houston Review.

**Afghan aid submissions**

The Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade has closed submissions to its review on *'the administration, management and objective of Australia's overseas development programs in Afghanistan in the context of the 'Transition Decade'.* The Terms of Reference (ToR) can be read [here](#). Public submissions, 16 in total including one from Devpolicy's Stephen Howes and Jonathan Pryke, are available [here](#). Some highlights of the submissions include:

- Denis Dragovic's submission addresses safety concerns highlighted in the ToR, recalling his extensive experience in Iraq and Afghanistan and called for a separation and differentiation between NGOs/aid workers and the military.
- ACFID calls on the Committee to broaden its inquiry to facilitate not just a retroactive but forward-looking assessment.
- The ANU's Professor William Maley, acknowledging the very tenuous prospects of the transition period, highlights the future safety and well-being needs of Afghans that have worked closely with Australians and exposed themselves to risk, to figure prominently in the planning for the next phase of engagement with Afghanistan.
- The Liaison Office, made famous for AusAID's recent [cancelling](#) of its contract, takes the opportunity to publicly highlight and correct claimed errors made in the May [Senate Estimates](#) (see pg. 51). The most notable is its claim that it delivered a total of 13 reports to AusAID, not the six that DG Peter Baxter claimed. The story has been picked up by the Australian, available [here](#).
- Global Witness calls on Australian aid to focus on the strengthening of governance and anti-corruption safeguards for the oil and mining sector as a strategic priority.
- Nematullah Bizhan calls on the aid program to limit its scope and objectives and attach firm conditions on Australian aid to urge Afghanistan to put diplomatic pressure on Pakistan to cease its financial and logistical support for the Taliban.
- Several NGOs made submissions including, jointly, Save the Children, Oxfam and World Vision and, separately, CARE Australia.

Interestingly, the only government departments to have (so far) made submissions are the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and AusAID. The final report will be completed by the end of the year.

**Aid and the UN Security Council seat**

PM Julia Gillard is in NY for the UN General Assessembly making the case for Australia to be elected to the UN Security Council on October 16[8h]. Part of her case, according to the

press, is that Australia is now the 11ᵗʰ largest aid donor (though [according to the OECD](#) we are actually the 10ᵗʰ). One of the major controversies over the aid program since the election of the Rudd Government has been whether aid priorities have been distorted by the UN Council bid.

## AusAID fraud still in the media

AusAID [announced](#) it has lost up to $580,000 due to fraud in the past financial year, down from $1.4 million in potential losses the year before, an amount that represents 0.012 of 1 per cent of the total aid program, and that is [comparable](#) to domestic agencies. The topic (or non-topic) continues to gain relatively significant media attention (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

## Aid visitors

Our monthly account of visitors to Australia with an aid connection:

- Zimbabwean Minister of Finance, Tendai Biti, [visited Canberra](#) and met with various government officials, discussing Australia's ongoing support for the country's development.
- Asian Development Bank Pacific country and sectoral directors, led by Vice President Stephen Groff and Pacific Director General Xianbin Yao, held their annual consultations with AusAID earlier this month.

## In brief

Prime Minister Gillard has [announced](#) a new 10-year $320 million initiative to help improve the political, economic and social opportunities of Pacific women.

Australia has [committed](#) $85 million over four years to strengthen technical, vocational and higher education across the Pacific.

Australia has [committed](#) $25 million towards a new 'Pacific Oceanscape Framework' aiming to improve the sustainability of fish stocks in the pacific.

ODE has also [released](#) a discussion paper providing staff with a definition, guidance and minimum standards around impact evaluations to support their appropriate and effective use.

Wendy Jarvie has put forward 10 reasons for why AusAID should stay in Latin America on the Lowy Interpreter (in two parts [here](#) and [here](#)).

AusAID has [released](#) its 'AusAID-NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) Annual Performance

Report 2011'

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute has released a new paper 'Making waves: Australian ocean development assistance' (discussed in this blog), which calls on AusAID to make oceans a key theme of its work. ACFID's Susan Harris Rimmer provides a response here.

AusAID has released a new blog announcing a survey to be conducted by InterMedia in Vanuatu over the next month on issues ranging from access to information and knowledge, attitudes and practices in health, gender issues, perceptions on foreign aid and elections. This work follows on from InterMedia's recent survey funded by the Gates Foundation 'Building Support for International Development' (BSID).

A recent debate held in Melbourne on whether foreign aid is a waste of money is now available on the ABC website. The audience ultimately rejected the proposition, but not nearly as convincingly as was recently witnessed in the Howes/White debate on the same issue recently held at the ANU (podcast here, blog series justifying aid here).

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### About the author/s

**Jonathan Pryke**
Jonathan Pryke worked at the Development Policy Centre from 2011, and left in mid-2015 to join the Lowy Institute, where he is now Director of the Pacific Islands Program. He has a Master of Public Policy/Master of Diplomacy from Crawford School of Public Policy and the College of Diplomacy, ANU.