

POTENTIAL AID CUTS FLY IN THE FACE OF A COMPASSIONATE NATION

Caritas Australia CEO, Paul O'Callaghan says he is "alarmed" to hear that the Coalition Government is considering cutting Australia's aid budget by up to 10%. This is in addition to the 30% of cuts we have seen since 2013 and would significantly undermine our country's efforts to help end extreme poverty, save lives, and support communities in times of major humanitarian disasters.

Mr O'Callaghan says the government's plans run in stark contrast to the compassion and generosity of the Australian people.

"At Caritas Australia we have just run our Easter Lenten appeal whereby thousands of people – mums, dads, grandparents and school children - raised millions of dollars for Project Compassion," he said. "These are generous Australians from every walk of life showing leadership by donating their time, effort and money to stand in solidarity with the world's poorest communities.

"Yet our government is demonstrating the opposite, choosing instead to walk away from the poor."

One of the areas that the government is considering cutting aid funding is health. Mr O'Callaghan says; "this would end support for thousands of projects throughout the world that don't just save lives but also enable new lives to be born.

"As one example, Caritas Australia has been working in partnership with the Safe Motherhood Program in Bangladesh for ten years, a program that has been financially supported by the Australian Government. The program has enabled tens of thousands of women to safely give birth. It is programs like this that are now at risk."

"My message to the Australian Government is clear: thanks to successive governments across the political spectrum and the compassion of the Australian people, we have a long and proud history of helping build a world free from poverty and injustice.

"More girls are now being educated, millions of people have access to clean drinking water and for the first time in our history HIV infection rates are on a downward trajectory. We must continue this great tradition and build on these significant and hard won development gains."

For those that want to take action please call or write to your Federal MP. Explain that you're a constituent and that you're against the proposed cuts to the Australian aid budget. You can find your MP's details at www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members

Caritas Media contact: Nicole Clements on 0408 869 833/ nicolec@caritas.org.au or Susan Duric on 0407 536 130/ caritasmedia@caritas.org.au.