

Caritas Australia urges the government to show greater leadership amid converging global crises.

Caritas Australia CEO Kirsty Robertson welcomed the Government's addition of \$193m to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in tonight's budget, with the extra funding in part going to increasing DFAT's capacity, especially in the Pacific.

"Additional funding is sorely needed in a world facing unprecedented conflict and humanitarian crises and is required if the government is to meet the targets for overseas aid that it has set itself."

However, Caritas Australia holds concerns around the lack of growth as a percentage of Australia's national income, and relative to both the challenges the world faces and the investments of other comparable nations.

"We acknowledge the uncertain economic backdrop against which this budget was delivered, but it is disappointing to see Australia's generosity stalling in the face of surmounting global challenges," said Kirsty Robertson.

"Along with others in the sector we have been calling for the Humanitarian Emergency Fund to be doubled to \$300 million to provide an adequate response to the increasingly intense and complex conflicts and natural disasters the world is facing. These problems have direct economic effects here in Australia, so we should be investing in solutions."

In 2023 the World Health Organisation revealed that [735m](#) people were facing hunger, vs. 613m in 2019. Deaths from global conflict increased by [96%](#) to 238,000. By the end of September 2023, ahead of the conflict in Gaza, [114 million](#) people had already been forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide. The World Economic Forum also revealed climate damage costs the world [\\$16.3 million](#) per hour in damages.

"In the past year alone, conflict has plunged Gaza into one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, Lebanon has come to face one of the worst economic crises seen in 150 years, and hunger in the Horn of Africa remains pervasive with conflict in Sudan pushing millions of displaced people to the brink of famine. What's more, COP28 failed to reassure the world's most vulnerable communities - especially our neighbours in the Pacific - that the global north is committed to tackling climate change and climate injustice."

"Meanwhile, Australia currently ranks 26th out of 31 of the world's largest economies in terms of investment in overseas aid relatively to the size of our economy. This budget will see us invest 0.18% of our income as a country in aid. The average among similar countries is 0.37%. We are supposed to be on a pathway to 0.5% as outlined in the Labor National Platform."

"While we understand there are domestic challenges, we want to remind the government that Australia has a moral, economic, and political imperative to support those less fortunate. People living facing hunger, displaced from their homes, that have experienced the worst of violence and suffering. If we want to see a better world and a better future, we must prioritise walking alongside the world's most vulnerable."

Caritas Australia works hand in hand with the most marginalised and remote communities in Australia and overseas to address poverty and inequality with a focus on long-term and sustained development programs. Over 760,000 people were directly

supported over a 12-month period to the end of June 2023, with over 90 national and international partners fundamental to the success of these programs.

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