

SPECIAL REPORT

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A better fit National security and Australia's aid program

Report of an Independent Task Force



Chairs' introduction

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute and the Foundation for Development Cooperation recently convened an independent task force to consider the relationship between Australia's national security and our official development assistance.

The Australian Government is committed to increasing the aid program until it reaches 0.5% of gross national income by 2015–16. That's likely to double our spending on aid. AusAID will be one of our biggest spending government agencies.

How this large increase in development assistance advances our national security should be an important matter for debate.

Our foreign aid should contribute to regional stability and be part of our strategy to address problems that might cause Australia security concern.

Aid, by promoting prosperity, can assist regional states to become our trading partners. Aid helps countries whose interests align with Australia's to increase their national capacities in key areas, such as human security. In that sense, our aid's a strategic investment; it strengthens our security by assisting friendly states that we believe are important to us.

How far the Australian Government should use our aid to pursue security interests was a key issue examined by the task force. There's certainly scope for greater integration of the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Defence, the Australian Federal Police and AusAID when it comes to aid for priority countries.

We hope that this report will better inform our official aid planners and national security decision-makers on how best to leverage aid to advance Australia's security interests.

We would like to thank the task force members for their constructive input and dedication; the principal project manager, Anthony Bergin from ASPI; and the rapporteur for the group's work, Stewart Firth. Professor Firth produced an excellent preliminary discussion paper that informed the task force's deliberations. The names of all members of the task force are at the end of this report.

**Peter Abigail, Executive Director, ASPI and
Sean Rooney, Executive Director, FDC**

Task Force Chairs