

## AUSTRALIAN ANGLICANS PROTEST AID BUDGET CUTS



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Australia's Anglican Overseas Aid and the Australian Board of Mission have teamed up with more than 50 aid and development agencies to campaign against significant cuts to the country's aid budget.

The Lowy Institute for International Policy reports that Australia's aid programme has been "the disproportionate victim of the coalition government budget savings measures"; saying that the aid budget accounts for only one per cent of government expenditure; but is bearing the brunt of 25 per cent of the total budget savings. The institute says that the cuts leaves Australia at our an all-time low when it comes to its aid generosity.



In response, a coalition of agencies has come together under the umbrella **Campaign for Anglican Aid** to protest against the cuts and to persuade Australians of the difference aid can make to people in the poorest parts of the world.

In addition to **Anglican Overseas Aid** and the **Australian Board of Mission**, the coalition includes a number of other Christian agencies, including Caritas, Micah, World Vision, Baptist World Aid and the Australian Lutheran World Service.

As part of the campaign, Anglican Overseas Aid has produced a video featuring Grandma Martha – dubbed "**the coolest grandma on Earth**" – who details the difference that Australian aid has made to the life of her family and community. Grandma Martha raised her grandchildren after her son died from HIV.



“People think I am a champion because I have overcome difficult experiences,” she says in the video. “I don’t know about everyone, but this is what my friends think. . . Thankfully, Australia is now empowering people in my community who help orphans. Giving to those in greater need than yourselves – that’s how you end poverty and suffering.”

She said that an Australian-funded local community group “has shown me a lot of goodness”, adding: “I have no words to describe it. Just my smile. . . I don’t have to say anything. You can see for yourself how you have helped me.”

The Primate of Australia, Archbishop Philip Freier, is the President of Anglican Overseas Aid. He commented: “What a heart-warming story the coolest grandma on earth offers!

“Usually the story around aid is full of suffering and need, but this is a wonderful story of hope and joy, and shows that Australian aid can make the huge difference that donors hope it will.

“This particular story shows the good work that has been achieved by the combination of Australian federal aid and contributions from Australian Anglicans, overseen by Anglican Overseas Aid in partnership with the Mother’s Union of the Anglican Church in Kenya.

“It also highlights the importance of the Federal Government restoring the overseas aid budget that has been savagely cut in recent years, and supporting agencies such as Anglican Overseas Aid that continue to do this important work. Australia, we bring hope and joy: let’s do more.”

In a related move, the Australian Board of Mission revealed that the government has cut the funding for its Church Partnership Programme (CPP) in Papua New Guinea by 30 per cent for the 2016/17 financial year.

Since 2004, the CPP has fostered close links between seven PNG churches and their Australian church partner development agencies. Together, they have used the churches’ grassroots connections across PNG to run community development projects that have strong local participation and local contributions, the ABM say.

Through the CPP, ABM has developed community-based adult literacy schools, raising awareness about HIV/Aids and gender-based violence; and providing training for young people and women in various life-skills such as improved agricultural methods, sewing and baking.

“The cuts to the CPP will mean fewer adult literacy classes, less awareness-raising about HIV/Aids and gender based violence, and fewer trainings to support communities to improve their livelihoods,” the ABM said. “The cuts will also mean that Anglicare PNG will have to defer their plans to pilot a comprehensive and integrated livelihoods project, that was to draw together different Anglicare programs to maximise the positive impact on communities.”

The cuts to Australia’s aid budget will see expenditure fall from 0.37 per cent of Gross National Income last year to 0.22 per cent this year – the lowest level of Australia Aid since records began and considerably below the UN’s target of 0.7 per cent.