

KEY QUESTION

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Who are the main actors in Australia's development cooperation?

DFAT manages almost all of Australia's overseas development programs

Australia's Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, leads overall policy decision-making. He has served as Prime Minister and Leader of the conservative Liberal Party since October 2015. In July 2016, Turnbull led the Liberal Party to narrowly secure enough seats to form a new Liberal National Coalition majority government. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) manages development policy and the development budget and delivers the vast majority of Australia's overseas programs. Former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, integrated the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the previous implementing agency, into DFAT in 2013. It was claimed that this merger would help deliver a more responsive and flexible development program, better aligned with Australia's national interests. Emulating the approach of conservative governments in Canada and New Zealand, the former government sought to save considerable administrative costs: DFAT cut 500 jobs by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2015-16.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, is the first female Foreign Minister and is responsible for directing Australia's development program. In 2015, Turnbull established the Minister for International Development and the Pacific position, a junior ministerial post, which is held by Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, to strengthen the relationship with the Pacific islands.

Within DFAT, Deputy Secretary Ewen McDonald oversees four development divisions, including the Multilateral Development and Finance Division, which manages contributions to multilateral organizations, and the Multilateral Policy Division, which includes the Gender Equality Branch. DFAT's innovation hub, known as 'innovationXchange', is hosted at DFAT but guided by a 14-member International Reference Group. While about 94% of the development program is managed by DFAT under Australia's 'whole of government approach', the department cooperates with other government agencies, which deliver the remaining approximately 6% of ODA.

Australia's parliament is responsible for debating and reviewing the overall federal budget between May and June, and passing it before the end of June. Importantly, the development budget component is not featured as a major subject of negotiation in Australian budget politics

and it is usually passed without amendments by the government majority in the House of Representatives. In the Senate, the proposed ODA budget is reviewed by the Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Legislation Committee. This committee can seek information on the proposed development program, but has no power to amend the budget.

The government funds civil society organizations (CSOs) with A\$178 million under the umbrella of its 'Global Programs'. In addition, Australian CSOs mobilize public support and voluntary contributions for development. In 2014, members of the Australian association for development NGOs, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), raised US\$838 million from the Australian community for development and humanitarian work. More than 140 Australian non-government organizations (NGOs) operate under ACFID's self-regulatory and highly regarded Code of Conduct, which defines standards of good development practice for its members. ACFID also supports policy engagement with the Australian government, as the primary entry point for collaboration and collective action by development NGOs in Australia. Over fifty Australian NGOs have met comprehensive due-diligence requirements through accreditation under DFAT's Australian NGO Cooperation Program. Accredited Australian NGOs are partners who have demonstrated their community support and their organizational capacity to deliver results, which enables them to receive funding from the government.

AUSTRALIA'S DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION SYSTEM

