

## KEY QUESTIONS

### the big six

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

#### **DFAT manages almost all of Australia's overseas development programs**

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison leads overall development policy decision-making. He has served as prime minister and leader of the conservative Liberal Party since August 2018, following an internal leadership shuffle which saw him replace Malcolm Turnbull. The Liberal-National Coalition has been in government since 2013. The next federal election is due by end-May 2019.

The minister for foreign affairs, currently Marise Payne, is responsible for directing Australia's development program. She is traditionally a strong parliamentary supporter of human rights and action on HIV/AIDS. The assistant minister for international development and the Pacific, Anne Ruston, works under Payne to strengthen Australia's relationships with the Pacific Islands. Launched by then-Prime Minister Turnbull in 2015 as a ministerial-level position, the position was downgraded to assistant minister in August 2018.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) manages development policy and the development budget and delivers almost all Australia's overseas programs. DFAT managed 93% of Australia's ODA in 2017. The department cooperates with other government agencies, including the Treasury and the Australian Federal Police, which deliver the remaining development assistance.

Within DFAT, the deputy secretary for Global Cooperation, Development, and Partnerships oversees four development divisions. These include 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 and guided by a 14-member International Reference Group.

Based on the government's overall development policies, DFAT sets the country program priorities. DFAT's geographic branches develop three-year 'Aid Investment Plans' with major recipient countries, outlining Australia's priorities and expected results. Individual development activities are implemented within the agreed investment plan. DFAT executive staff responsible for

geographic branches make final recommendations on funding for specific programs to the foreign affairs minister, who approves major initiatives or delegates her funding power. Performance benchmarks are set and reviewed through annual program performance reports. These are discussed each year with the partner country. The 2018 OECD Peer Review found that Australia's multi-year investment plans increase the predictability of development assistance, at least in the medium-term.

**Parliament:** Australia's parliament is responsible for formally reviewing the final federal budget between May and June each year. The budget is passed into law before the end of June, the end of the fiscal year. In practice, the budget, including the development budget component, 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.

**Civil Society:** The government channels bilateral ODA through civil society organizations (CSOs) under the umbrella of its 'Global Programs' budget component. In 2017, CSOs were funded with US\$238 million, or 10% of bilateral ODA, according to OECD data. In addition, Australian CSOs mobilize public support and voluntary contributions for development. More than 140 Australian non-government organizations (NGOs) operate under the Australian Council for International Development's (ACFID) self-regulatory and highly regarded Code of Conduct, which defines standards of good development practice for its members. As the primary entry point for collaboration and collective action by development NGOs in Australia, ACFID also supports policy engagement with the Australian government. 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

