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**Submission to Parliamentary Enquiry
Re the Role of Australia's International Development Program in
Preventing Conflict
January 2026**

**Submission from:
The Wellspring Community Australia –
Where Peace and Justice Meet**

The Wellspring Community is an Australia-wide inclusive community of followers of Christ. We are committed to work for justice and peace. We believe that prayer and politics belong together. As we pray “Your will be done on earth as it is heaven” we are affirming that social justice for all and peace on earth sit at the heart the Gospel of Christ.

We seek to:

- engage in forms of political witness and action, prayerfully and thoughtfully, to promote just and peaceful social, political and economic structures;
- promote a policy of renunciation of all weapons of mass destruction in all nations of the world;
- promote the United Nations Organisation as the principal means of international reconciliation and security, in place of military alliances;
- support and promote research and education into non-violent ways of achieving justice, peace and a sustainable global society;
- Work for reconciliation within and among nations by international sharing and exchange of experience and people, with particular concern for politically and economically oppressed nations;

"Our region is facing the most challenging strategic circumstances since the Second World War at a time when Australia's economic connection with the world has never been greater. Changes to our strategic environment demands a fundamentally new approach to the defence of Australia and our interests."¹

At a time such as this the Wellspring Community of Australia welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Government's Enquiry into the role Australia can play in preventing conflict especially in the Indo-Pacific Region – our neighbourhood – through the provision of development aid to countries.

Australia's Overseas Aid programmes have for many years provided assistance to neighbouring countries in the Indo-Pacific regions and, at times of emergency, to more distant places of need.

The Wellspring Community is concerned that such aid should continue in generous but measured allocations to assist countries to grow and reach their full potential and provide their citizens with the means to live healthy and productive lives.

In keeping with our Community's focus on Justice we have concerns regarding the distribution and handling of aid in many countries. Australia must continue to do all it can to maintain honest and fair handling of all aid and its purposing at every stage.

It is expected that aid given by Australia will be given for the direct benefit of the citizens in various recipient countries. The requirement that most aid should in various ways flow back to Australian concerns and government is disingenuous and often brings about a lack of transparency and good faith.

We further ask that aid given respect the sovereignty and determinations of the recipient citizenry in each country and that standards of accountability and transparency be applied at every step.

The end purpose of international aid must reflect Australia's continued insistence on peaceable co-existence between nations and this can only be achieved when all citizens' material, educational and social needs are met by the society in which they live. Australian aid must be directed towards peaceable purposes in individual societies and countries at all times.

To this end Australian aid should be primarily directed towards societal needs in areas of health, education, appropriate infrastructure and good governance and security in each country in which it is given.

A non-partisan, humanitarian distribution of aid which ensures full local civic participation and policy making is essential to ensure the building of local capacity and resilience.

Engaging local civic authorities such as community based NGOs and grass-roots community leaders and workers is likewise preferable to the employment of foreign aid workers. The upskilling of local communities should always be a key focus and built into any aid or development program in which Australian aid is involved.

Strong regional communities and countries who are equipped and supported as necessary by democratically provided aid from nations where partnerships and equal ventures are seen as preferable will aid the stability and peaceful coexistence of all countries within our Region.

The Wellspring Community, which reflects the aspirations and interests of many ordinary Australian citizens, hopes that this enquiry will bring about changes to Australia's foreign aid policies that more reflect the fairness and assistance that most Australians would expect from our Government and its agencies, both within Australia and our overseas neighbours and partners.

1. *Elicia Rudnicki, Acting Head Policy, Strategy and Engagement Australian Submarine Agency 20th October, 2025. Reply to a letter written by Wellspring to Richard Marles, Minister of Defence and Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister.*

Julie Brackenreg OAM
Peace and Justice Contact
Wellspring Community
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