

Juliet Vrakas Submission Inquiry into the role of Australia's international development program in preventing conflict 2025.

Juliet Vrakas

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Dear Committee Members

Ref: Inquiry into the role of Australia's international development program in preventing conflict.

Subject: Submission on Australia's International Development Program and Conflict Prevention (5 pages) .

Introduction

I am writing to provide a formal submission concerning the urgent need to safeguard Australia's international development program and foreign policy. This submission reflects my commitment to ensuring that Australia's aid efforts remain principled, transparent, and free from undue influence, and I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's important work in this area.

Australia's international development program is a vital instrument for peace and resilience. Its credibility depends on ensuring that aid and foreign policy are not used as vehicles for political interference, ideological bias, or extremist influence.

This submission proposes a clear framework — the **Democracy Protection Charter** — to safeguard democratic values and strengthen Australia's role as a neutral peace-builder.

Key Recommendations

1. Humanitarian First

Aid must remain strictly humanitarian, especially in conflict zones. It should never be tied to political recognition, military objectives, or ideological agendas.

2. Respect for Sovereignty

Programs should support local ownership and community-led solutions. Conditional aid or external imposition risks undermining sovereignty and trust.

3. Transparency and Accountability

- Require open parliamentary debate and public reporting on aid allocations and foreign policy decisions.
- Empower independent oversight bodies to review programs for compliance with democratic values.

4. Neutrality in Peace-building

Australia should act as a facilitator of peace, not a partisan actor. Neutrality ensures credibility and prevents escalation of conflict.

5. Civic Participation

Civil society, NGOs, and community groups must be encouraged to contribute to policy formation, ensuring diverse perspectives shape aid and foreign policy.

6. Education and Political Literacy

Expand civic education to build resilience against extremist rhetoric and strengthen democratic culture among citizens.

7. Safeguarding Democracy – The Democracy Protection Charter

As an important factor in preventing political interference, Australia should adopt a clear framework to protect democratic systems from extremist or biased influence.

Purpose:

To ensure Australia's international development program and foreign policy remain neutral, transparent, and firmly anchored in democratic values.

Guiding Principles:

1. **Humanitarian Neutrality** – Aid must remain strictly humanitarian, never tied to political or ideological agendas.
2. **Respect for Sovereignty** – Programs must support local ownership and avoid external imposition.
3. **Transparency and Accountability** – All decisions subject to open debate, reporting, and oversight.
4. **Safeguards Against Extremism** – Strengthen institutions so no extremist ideology can

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- override democratic checks and balances.
5. **Civic Participation** – Encourage diverse voices in shaping policy.
 6. **Education and Political Literacy** – Build resilience against extremist rhetoric through civic education.
 7. **Universal Rights Framework** – Anchor all aid and foreign policy in international law and human rights standards.
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Conclusion

Australia's credibility as a peace-builder depends on protecting democracy from interference and anchoring aid in universal rights. By adopting the **Democracy Protection Charter**, the Committee can ensure that Australia's international role genuinely contributes to peace, resilience, and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

Submitted respectfully,

Juliet Vrakas

Australian Sociologist

Private Citizen

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Cover Note – Democracy Protection Charter

To: The Committee on Australia's International Development Program and Conflict Prevention

Subject: Attachment – **Democracy Protection Charter**

Dear Committee Members,

Please find attached the **Democracy Protection Charter**, developed as part of my submission to this inquiry.

This Charter sets out a clear framework of guiding principles to safeguard Australia's democracy and ensure that our international development program and foreign policy remain neutral, transparent, and firmly anchored in universal rights. It is designed to prevent political interference, ideological bias, and extremist influence from undermining the integrity of our democratic institutions.

The Charter is presented as a concise, one-page declaration for ease of reference. It complements the broader submission by offering a practical road-map for reform and accountability.

I respectfully commend this Charter to the Committee as an important factor in strengthening Australia's credibility as a peace-builder and protecting the democratic values that underpin our international role.

Yours sincerely,

Juliet Vrakas

Australian Sociologist

Private Citizen

Democracy Protection Charter

Attachment to Submission on Australia's International Development Program

Purpose: To safeguard Australia's democracy and ensure that international development and foreign policy remain neutral, transparent, and anchored in universal rights.

Guiding Principles

1. Humanitarian Neutrality

- Aid must remain strictly humanitarian.
- No program should be tied to political recognition, military objectives, or ideological agendas.

2. Respect for Sovereignty

- Support local ownership and community-led solutions.
- Avoid external imposition of governance models or conditional aid.

3. Transparency and Accountability

- Require open parliamentary debate and public reporting on aid and foreign policy.
- Independent oversight bodies must review programs for compliance with democratic values.

4. Safeguards Against Extremism

- Strengthen institutions so no extremist ideology—religious, political, or otherwise—can override democratic checks and balances.
- Policies must focus on protecting democracy, not excluding communities.

5. Civic Participation

- Encourage civil society, NGOs, and community groups to contribute to policy formation.
- Ensure diverse perspectives shape aid and foreign policy.

6. Education and Political Literacy

- Expand civic education to build resilience against extremist rhetoric.
- Promote political literacy to strengthen democratic culture among citizens.

7. Universal Rights Framework

- Anchor all aid and foreign policy in international law and human rights standards.
- Ensure consistency with fairness, justice, and dignity.

Conclusion

By adopting this Charter, Australia can protect its democracy, prevent political interference, and ensure its international role genuinely contributes to peace and resilience.