

Women faith leaders and CEOs take aid message to Parliament

Caritas Australia CEO Kirsten Sayers joined Christian women leaders and development sector CEOs in Canberra to urge stronger investment in Australian aid as the world faces escalating climate impacts, disasters, conflict and displacement.

The parliamentary delegation, convened by Micah Australia, met with leaders and representatives from across the political spectrum, including officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to highlight Australian aid as a vital contribution to a safer, more stable and more prosperous region.

The meetings formed part of Micah Australia's Safer World For All campaign, which is building public and cross-partisan support for Australian aid so it can be protected and responsibly restored over time. The long-term goal of the campaign is to see aid restored to 1% of the Federal Budget, a modest level that governments of both major parties have maintained in the past.

For faith communities, the case for aid is grounded in a shared moral call to stand with people experiencing poverty, disaster and displacement, and to protect the dignity of those most vulnerable.

"Across our region, communities are facing more frequent disasters, growing economic pressures and the long-term impacts of conflict and displacement," Kirsten Sayers said. "With this rising need in mind, we valued the opportunity to meet with leaders across the political spectrum to highlight how vital Australian aid is to the stability and strength of our region, and to supporting those experiencing the greatest need."

The delegation pointed to the recent generosity of Australians following the flood disaster in Nepal as evidence that communities here continue to care deeply about people facing crisis beyond Australia's borders. However, discussion also highlighted the need for sustained support long after public attention has moved on, as disasters can deepen existing vulnerabilities for months and years after they strike.

Caritas also emphasised the role of faith-based organisations, including the Catholic Church, in supporting communities before, during and after crises, drawing on relationships built over many years.

"Faith-based networks are often embedded in communities long before a disaster occurs, among the first to respond when crisis hits, and still present long after media attention has moved on to support recovery and rebuilding," Kirsten Sayers said. "Their relationships are deeply local in nature and born out of decades of work and collaboration. This approach delivers better outcomes for communities and simply cannot be replicated."

The meetings followed a visit to Canberra by Pacific church leaders from Papua New Guinea just a day earlier, reflecting growing recognition of the role churches and local faith networks can play in Australia's regional engagement.

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