



Media release

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Aid budget cuts will devastate people with disabilities

The Federal Government has failed people with disabilities in tonight's aid budget by maintaining deep cuts to critical funding for disability inclusion. The peak international development disability group, Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC), describes the move as cruel for a Government that has promised to protect the most impacted and vulnerable.

ADDC Executive Officer Kerry Clarke said the COVID-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on people with disabilities throughout our region and globally.

"People with disabilities are more likely to die from COVID-19, making up more than 50 per cent of all deaths in high income countries," Ms Clarke said. "That figure is likely to be much, much higher in low and middle income countries. Without strategic intervention, the pandemic is set to widen inequalities and push people with disabilities and their families deeper into poverty and increase the death rate even further.

"It is devastating to see our most vulnerable friends and neighbours abandoned when they need us the most."

Ms Clarke said it was crucial that Australia prioritised the needs of people with disabilities across the whole aid program. We welcome Australia's inclusion of people with disabilities in the *Partnerships for Recovery* strategy. This now needs to translate into real action with significant funding committed or the most vulnerable will fall further behind as the pandemic continues to ravage our neighbours."

ADDC is calling for the Government to put a focus on disability inclusion in their COVID-19 response, including specific funding, and to increase the central disability allocation to a minimum of \$14m per annum.

Ms Clarke said no new funding in the central budget allocation for disability inclusion and years of declining aid funding more broadly continues to push people with disabilities to the margins. "The central disability budget is a very small amount that can go a long way to bring local voices of people with disabilities and their agendas to the table," Ms Clarke said.

"Australia is surrendering its leadership when it comes to inclusion unless there's a strong commitment to adequate funding to ensure that people with disabilities are consulted and included in all aspects of Australia's international COVID-19 response and recovery. It will help save lives and ensure the poorest of the poor are not left further behind", Ms Clarke said.

ADDC is a community of over 700 members and subscribers that support disability and international development matters, including from domestic Organisations of People with Disabilities, international development agencies, private sector contractors, academics and more.

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