

Mr Bob McMullan MHR
Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance
PO Box 6022

House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr McMullan,

We are the Victorian branch of Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH). We are committed to Australia achieving its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, the 15 year action plan to tackle global poverty, because we see poverty alleviation as a strategy to prevent human trafficking.

We quote from the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women's Call to Action (March 2010):

Global, national and local strategies, including for the achievement of the MDGs, must be re-directed to a more participatory and human rights based approach, including mainstreaming a gender perspective in all programs and policies.

We also quote a recent article in the Age (18/02/10):

Australia's per capita income is higher than that of many affluent nations, including Sweden, Denmark and Britain.

By contrast, a billion people on our planet struggle to survive on the purchasing power of \$US 1.25 a day or less. They are likely to go to bed hungry, can't afford even the most basic healthcare and their children whom they may not be able to afford to send to school are likely to get ill because they don't have safe drinking water.

Being reminded about these unwelcome facts really worries us. From the website we learn that every week each one of us puts in around \$3.30 to pay for our aid program – about the cost of a cup of coffee!

Kevin Rudd pledged to raise Australia's foreign aid to 0.5 per cent and if he keeps to the government's forward spending estimates that promise will be met in 2010. Presently Australia gives 0.34% of our national income.

Five countries – Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Luxembourg and the Netherlands have given 0.7% for decades. Netherlands has a population of 15 million. European Union's 27 countries, (with the exception of Ireland Greece and Spain) have maintained their contribution of an average of 0.47% in spite of the financial crisis.

We are as rich as Britain and Sweden. We have millions of the world's poor closer to our borders than they do. Is there any reason why we cannot give as much as they do? We urge you to do all in your power to increase our aid and to ensure a gender perspective in all programs and policies.

A delegation from ACRATH Vic would like to meet with you to discuss this matter. We will phone your parliamentary office in the next fortnight to make a time.

Yours sincerely,