

# MEDIA RELEASE

## MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### ALEXANDER DOWNER

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FA106

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#### **AID TO AFGHANISTAN BOOSTED**

Australia will significantly increase aid to Afghanistan by providing an additional \$115 million over two years. This brings our total aid commitment to Afghanistan to \$450 million since 2001.

Australia recognises the vital importance of serious and sustained international support to the Government of Afghanistan in building a stable and prosperous future for its people. Australia remains committed to helping defeat the Taliban insurgency and preventing Al Qaeda re-establishing a terrorist safe-haven in Afghanistan.

The new aid package will reinforce the progress being made by Australia's militarily-led reconstruction effort in Oruzgan Province – one of the neediest parts of Afghanistan. It will improve the delivery of essential services such as health and education, strengthen agricultural production and help build security and stability in Afghanistan and adjoining areas of Pakistan.

The additional commitment will strengthen the capacity of both national and provincial level governments to deliver services and security and help fill the vacuum which has been exploited by extremists and drug traffickers in Afghanistan.

The new aid package will also be used to help boost governance and security in Pakistan's tribal regions. By supporting measures such as education reform, the aid package will help the Government of Pakistan tackle its own problems with extremism.

Australian assistance to Afghanistan has to date supported elections and the adoption of a new constitution as well as providing critical support for essential public services in the health, education and governance sectors.

With some 970 Australian Defence Force personnel deployed and as a substantial donor, Australia is making a vital contribution to bringing security and development to the people of Afghanistan. Australia will remain steadfast in its support for Afghanistan and will continue to work with our international partners to prevent the country from again becoming a haven for terrorists.