

## Full response from Reverend Tim Costello

Written by Sunanda Creagh, Editor, The Conversation

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In relation to [this FactCheck](#) on Australia's foreign aid spending, the Reverend Tim Costello, chief advocate of World Vision Australia, said (questions from The Conversation are in bold):

**Could you please provide a source to support the statement that aid was at its highest under Menzies, at 0.5%?**

The source is the OECD and the data is [presented graphically on their website](#) .

If anything I perhaps understated the case because aid was actually a bit higher than 0.5% in the 1960s.

Aid first went over 0.5% in 1963, dipped slightly in 1964, then went over 0.5% again from 1965 and every subsequent year into the 1970s. In 1967 and again in 1970 it hit 0.62%.

The highest single year was 1975 at 0.65% but the highest decade taken as an average was the 1960s under Menzies.

**Could you please clarify you meant 0.5% of national income?**

Regarding national income we are talking about GNI per capita.

The World Bank use a way of calculating GNI called the Atlas method that adjusts the raw figure to take account of the two main distorting factors, i.e., fluctuating exchange rates and inflation.

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This is what they use to classify countries by income levels and it is generally used by UN agencies and the OECD to determine or describe funding levels.

**Is there any other comment you would like us to include in the article?**

The 0.7% goal was only adopted by all UN members in 2001 but it was proposed in 1969 or 1970 by the former Canadian PM Mike Pearson - he was chair of the Commission on International Development set up by the World Bank. The original idea was 1% being 0.7% in government aid and a further 0.3% from private.

Australia's contribution to the Colombo Plan was a major commitment but not the only thing that pushed aid up in the 60s/70s. Two others were civil aid to South Vietnam and a proportionally bigger commitment to PNG ahead of independence.

Interestingly the graph shows that the Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke and Howard governments all cut aid on taking office but later realised their error and changed direction.

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