



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## CALL FOR GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN DEFENCE AID

A report released today by the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) warns that military delivered aid projects in Afghanistan appear to be a part of the larger counter-insurgency strategy and are likely ineffective.

There is evidence that ‘hearts and minds’ projects and aid in the service of military and political objectives are counter-productive.

“Aid directed towards counter insurgency objectives is very problematic,” said Marc Purcell, Executive Director of ACFID.

“It can extend authority of government leaders, viewed by Afghanis as corrupt and illegitimate. It blurs the distinction between aid based on real need and aid based on political gains. And, it has created a ‘peace penalty’, skewing aid to locations where the fighting is the most intense and neglecting other areas.

“We are gravely concerned about the overall lack of public information about Defence-led aid in Uruzgan,” Mr Purcell said.

“If it is the case that ADF aid projects are being used as part of the larger Allied counter insurgency strategy, then this should be clearly stated. The Official Development Assistance funds of the Australian Government should not be used for this purpose; this money should come from Defence appropriations.

“If the ADF’s work is solely about poverty alleviation, then it should be subject to the same sort of scrutiny as the civilian aid program and have clearly stated goals, regular evaluations and assessment of value of money.

“At the moment, Defence is failing on both counts: they have no clearly stated goal for their aid and development activities and they admit they do not evaluate ADF these activities in Uruzgan.

“Value for money appears to be out of control. Of their aid expenditure of \$252 million over the past four years in Uruzgan, only \$37 million has gone into projects, including security, with the remainder spent on ‘support and associated costs’ which are yet to be explained.

“The Government needs to exercise a greater level of accountability over Defence-led aid, and to ensure clear, transparent goals are articulated and independent monitoring and evaluation in undertaken.

“Let me be clear, this is not about criticising the individual soldiers who undertake aid projects in Uruzgan, executing their duties with diligence and professionalism. But there is a real question about whether the Defence Force should be in the business of running long term aid programs all,” Mr Purcell concluded.

**MEDIA CONTACT: JOY KYRIACOU (02) 6281 9219 or 0412 084 782**

**ACFID’s full report *In it for the long haul? Delivering Australian aid to Afghanistan* is available at [www.acfid.asn.au](http://www.acfid.asn.au)**