

## **Joyce needs a little aid with facts**

If Barnaby Joyce thought through the human cost of his proposal to cut Australia's \$50 million aid funding to the World Bank, he would realise how devastating it might be ("Joyce in firing line after aid blooper", February 4).

Australian aid funding to the World Bank supports programs for the poor in many countries in our region: for feeding children at school, supporting pregnant women and nursing mothers, running food-for-work programs, as well as for emergency cash handouts in famine areas.

Food prices remain volatile. Maize is 50 per cent more expensive than its average price between 2003 and 2006, while rice prices are 100 per cent higher. A 10 per cent increase in the price of rice in Indonesia can put this basic food out of reach of 2 million people.

When food prices are high, poor people either eat less, switch to cheaper, lower-quality foods, or forgo spending on health and education. The Coalition would cut this aid at the peril of the lives of the poor.

### **Marc Purcell**

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