

Australian government pledges a miserable \$5 million for Nepal-China flood victims

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Amid the horrific scenes emerging from Nepal and China following massive flooding on Wednesday, the Australian Labor government has displayed the utter indifference of the imperialist powers to the plight of the poor and oppressed victims.

Labor Foreign Minister Penny Wong accompanied empty statements of concern and condolence with a pledge of just \$5 million to the rescue, recovery and relief effort. Describing that as a drop in the ocean would, if anything, risk overstating the contribution. Wong unveiled the pitiful spend even while declaring that the “scale of the destruction is devastating.”

The flood is one of the worst disasters in the region in years, if not decades. While the full impact is still emerging, entire villages were swept away. The official death toll in Nepal rose today to 579 and 7 in Chinese-controlled Tibet. However, with at least 2,478 people missing, the tragic losses are certain to rise.

The Australian government’s \$5 million pledge is divided into \$3 million for the emergency response and \$2 million in food relief.

Even if Labor ultimately increases its contribution, the initial display of contempt will remain. Under conditions of thousands of people still missing and rescue operations ongoing, the assistance is obviously time critical.

Among those who remain missing are at least 41 Australians. Fifteen were on a Himalayan tour group, including two boys aged 11 and 14.

The paltry character of the Australian contribution is underscored by several comparisons:

* After a decades-long property bubble, fuelled by government policies geared to investors, the average house price in Sydney is roughly \$1.73 million. The government’s \$5 million pledge would not be enough to purchase three average homes in Australia’s most

populous city.

* Labor has increased annual military spending to a record \$60 billion. That equates to \$164.4 million every single day, almost 33 times more than the contribution to the disaster effort. The \$5 million is equivalent to what the government hands to the war machine every 44 minutes.

* Official estimates, likely an understatement, indicate that total government subsidies to business amounted to \$16.8 billion in the 2024–25 financial year. That is 3,360 times more than the \$5 million pledged to the Nepal relief effort.

The miserable contribution is not an aberration but the continuation of a longstanding pattern that has continued under successive governments, including the current Labor administration that has been in office since 2022.

For instance:

* Following six tropical cyclones in the Philippines in late 2024, which affected millions of people, Australia announced \$5 million in humanitarian assistance.

* Following the devastating Cyclone Ditwah in Sri Lanka in 2025, Australia initially announced just \$1 million, subsequently increasing the response to \$3.5 million.

* Across a succession of cyclones, floods, earthquakes and landslides throughout the Indo-Pacific in October–December 2025, the government announced that its combined assistance had reached only “over \$14 million.”

Those responses to specific events are part of a broader policy. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) 2025 peer review concluded that Australian official development assistance (ODA) remained “low by international standards.”

In 2024, Australia spent only 0.19 percent of gross national income on ODA, ranking 28th of the 32 OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries. The OECD also noted that aid amounted to only 0.65 percent of the federal budget, the lowest level in a decade. In preliminary 2025 figures, the ratio fell further to 0.18 percent of gross national income, placing Australia 24th among DAC countries and dramatically below the longstanding United Nations target of 0.7 percent.

Labor's vast build-up of the military is aimed at completing Australia's transformation into a frontline state for an aggressive US-led war against China in the Indo-Pacific. A key component of Australia's role in that criminal program is to pressure, cajole and demand that states throughout the region, including historically-oppressed and impoverished nations, join the anti-China war drive.

Labor habitually cloaks those exercises in imperialist foreign policy with references to its concern for the "Indo-Pacific family" and its supposed bonds of commitment to the welfare of the people of the region. The literal pocket change that it is grudgingly giving to the people of Nepal gives the lie to those claims.

In reality, Labor's participation in global war, a central driver of humanitarian crises, is inextricably linked to its contempt for the oppressed. For almost three years, Labor has politically, diplomatically and materially aided the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, in one of the worst war crimes of the 21st century.

Alongside insisting on the "right" of the Zionist regime to bombard Gaza and to kill tens of thousands, Labor directly aided Israel's policy of using starvation as a weapon of war, suspending its already paltry funding to UNRWA, the United Nations agency responsible for feeding and providing aid to the Palestinians, in early 2024.

There is no brick wall between the attitude of imperialist governments to the oppressed masses of the world and to the working class domestically.

In 2019–20, as vast swathes of Australia burned in some of the most devastating bushfires in the country's history, the then Liberal-National Coalition government responded with contemptuous indifference. That was summed up by the infamous decision of Liberal-National Coalition Prime Minister Scott Morrison to

holiday in Hawaii during the disaster, and his declaration in response to subsequent public outrage that he is not one to "hold a hose."

In February 2022, the absence of any coordinated national response to disasters was underscored by catastrophic flooding in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland. Amid the inundation, flood victims were completely left to their own devices, compelled to rescue one another in recreational boats. More than four years on and many of those dispossessed in the disaster remain without secure housing.

As the WSWs noted, the scale of the disaster in Nepal, and the increasing frequency of such events globally, underscores the impact of climate change. The Labor government has facilitated the continued expansion of Australia's fossil fuel industry, approving new and expanded coal and gas projects while insisting that new sources of gas supply will be required for decades.

In its May budget, Labor unveiled the biggest single cut to a government program in history, a \$38 billion reduction in funding to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) over four years. The policy will kick 241,000 disabled people off support and prevent more than 100,000 others from accessing it, in a brutal austerity measure that will claim the lives of some of the most vulnerable. In the same budget, Labor rejected calls for any increased tax on the super-profits of the coal and gas conglomerates.



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