

---

### Australia supports formation of emergency Palestinian Government

Australia will provide \$4 million to support the emergency Palestinian Government and a further \$3 million in humanitarian funding for refugees in Gaza and Lebanon.

Australia's contribution to the emergency Palestinian Government will be delivered through the Temporary International Mechanism and will assist in providing essential supplies for the Palestinian Authority's health and education institutions to keep hospitals open and children in school.

Australia supports Palestinian Authority President Abbas's decision to form an emergency government with Mr Salam Fayyad as Prime Minister following the violent Hamas takeover of Gaza.

The formation of the emergency government presents a valuable opportunity to revive the peace process and ensure that the actions of violent extremists do not derail the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

I welcome the comments of Israeli Prime Minister Olmert that the emergency government would be regarded as a partner for peace. I also welcome the re-engagement by the international community, particularly the United States and the Quartet with the emergency government. The efforts of the Arab League and key Arab states to promote dialogue are also important in this regard.

Australia directs its engagement with the Palestinian Authority through our Representative Office in Ramallah. Since January 2006 our engagement has been with the office of President Abbas and more recently with Fateh and independent members of the former government. We will continue to engage with the emergency Palestinian Government to promote the cause of peace and provide humanitarian assistance.

Australia remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Territories, particularly Gaza, following the recent violence.

We will provide a further \$2 million in immediate assistance for the Palestinians in Gaza. This support will be provided through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and will assist in providing emergency food assistance to an estimated 158,000 refugee families.

Australia will also provide a further \$1 million to UNRWA to assist in meeting the humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. This funding will assist in providing food, health services, shelter supplies, and water and sanitation services to about 27,000 displaced people.

These new commitments will take Australia's total contribution to Palestinians affected by the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank, and in surrounding countries, to \$23.2 million since July 2006.

Australian aid contributed to international efforts to provide emergency food assistance to almost 1.4 million Palestinian refugees and access to education, health and social services for over 4.3 million registered Palestinian refugees.

**Media Inquiries:** Mr Downer's office 02 6277 7500 - Departmental Media Liaison 02 6261 1555