
REVIEW OF DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE ANNUAL REPORT

The Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade is to review the Annual Report of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The Review will be undertaken by the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee, chaired by Michael Danby MHR, Member for Melbourne Ports.

In announcing the Review, Mr Danby explained that:

“The Department of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the vital functioning of Australia’s overseas diplomatic posts. How well is the Department performing that function? This is the first occasion of a review of the DFAT Annual Report since 2001-02. And in a world of changing political and economic circumstances we need to be asking ourselves whether the locations of our current diplomatic and consular posts, and the countries they cover, are serving our national concerns in the most efficient manner.

“How is DFAT fulfilling its many responsibilities?” Mr Danby continued. “Is Australia’s strong economic performance and increasing strategic prominence reflected in the level of funds available to DFAT and in the number and location of our posts overseas? Many foreign embassies are now based in Canberra but we do not have matching Australian diplomatic representation in those countries? Is this wise? Are there opportunities we are missing out on here? “

Mr Danby highlighted the fact that: “The Department of Foreign Affairs is particularly responsible for the protection and welfare of Australian citizens abroad, and this includes the provision of timely, responsive travel advisories. In areas of most recent conflict, such as Egypt and Libya, much good work has been done by DFAT staff protecting and evacuating stranded Australians. At other times, however, DFAT travel warnings and safety advisories to Australians have been criticised as inadequate, untimely and unresponsive, even by other governments.” Mr Danby also pointed out that: “DFAT is also responsible for providing a secure presence and appropriate communications for so many other Australian Government operations overseas: trade, culture, taxation, immigration, tourism - a myriad of activities. Are these up to best practice? How well is DFAT using various new media, such as Facebook and Twitter, to communicate with Australians living and travelling overseas?”

In conclusion, he stated that: “These are the kinds of issues the DFAT Hearings will examine and we absolutely welcome all public submissions.”

The Committee invites and will receive SUBMISSIONS until 14 APRIL 2011 and will be conducting a PUBLIC HEARING on Monday 9 MAY 2011.

For Media Inquiries: Contact the Sub-Committee Chairman, Michael Danby MHR (03) 9534 8126

For All Other Inquiries: Contact the Sub-Committee Secretary, John Carter, on (02) 6277 4306 or visit the Committee Website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfad

Copies of the DFAT Annual Report can also be obtained at [websitewww.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfad](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfad)