

Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Legislation Committee
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Secretary Jan Adams AO PSM
Additional Estimates - 12 February 2026
Opening Statement

Chair, Senators, thank you for the opportunity to provide an opening statement.

We meet in the aftermath of the horrific antisemitic terrorist attack at Bondi Beach. In addition to the Foreign Minister's international outreach, DFAT has supported diplomatic missions in providing consular support to their nationals impacted, and we provided practical support for victims, and for families who needed to travel to Australia.

Our posts overseas hosted memorial ceremonies and opened condolence books to help people grieve and show their support and respect for the victims.

Check against delivery

DFAT is committed to cooperating fully with the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion. There is no place in Australia for antisemitism, racial hatred, or extremism.

This week, we have supported Israeli President Herzog's visit to Australia, during which he is honouring the victims of the Bondi terrorist attack, and providing comfort to their families and to the Jewish community.

Senators, as I have said in previous Committee hearings, Australia is having to deal with a deteriorating security environment. Events in just the last few months expose an international system under pressure; we face greater unpredictability from sharpening geostrategic competition, and challenges to existing rules and norms.

The pace of change and disruption is accelerating and the risks for our national security and economic resilience can't be underestimated. On the other hand Australians can be confident we are working effectively with agility to navigate this uncertainty.

Check against delivery

As a middle power, we are not just seeking to adapt to this less stable world; we are seizing every opportunity to shape it for the better.

First, our priority remains our region. We are pushing forward with a series of groundbreaking agreements that bind us closer to our neighbours in Southeast Asia and in the Pacific through shared interests, and a shared stake in each other's future.

This architecture includes the Treaty on Common Security with Indonesia – the 'Jakarta Treaty' – signed by the Prime Minister last week, a watershed moment in the relationship with our most important neighbour, it also includes agreements we are progressing with Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga.

The Department supported the Prime Minister's visit to Timor-Leste – the first foreign leader to visit since Timor-Leste became a member of ASEAN last October. During the visit, the two leaders established the historic *Parseria* agreement.

Reflecting the importance of our agenda with the Pacific, we have hosted four Pacific leaders in just the last fortnight.

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As the Minister said, we welcomed again, Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manele, Palauan President Whipps, and received the Tongan Prime Minister for his first overseas visit. We welcomed President Heine for the first visit by a Marshallese President in 30 years.

Senators, we are also strengthening Australia's major strategic partnerships. In this 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Japan, we will further elevate all aspects of our special strategic partnership. We are getting on with this important agenda with the Takaichi Government, returned with a resounding majority in last Sunday's election. Japan is a crucial partner for Australia – a partner that makes a positive and strong contribution to stability, development and prosperity in our region. Australia supports Japan's efforts to maintain dialogue with China to de-escalate tensions, in support of regional stability and international law, while also opposing economic coercion.

In December last year, we used the 40th anniversary of the Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations, known as AUSMIN, to strengthen our Alliance and AUKUS activities.

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As the Committee will be aware, Ambassador Rudd will conclude his posting to the United States of America at the end of March, and I want to take this opportunity to record my own, and the Department's deepest thanks for his effectiveness and energy in delivering outcomes for Australia. Ambassador-designate Greg Moriarty is, eminently placed to progress our national interests in the United States in the coming years.

We are also preparing to strengthen our longstanding partnership with Canada when Prime Minister Carney visits Australia. Right now, our thoughts are with our Canadian friends in grief following the tragic school shooting in British Columbia.

Senators, it's crucial that we stand with Ukraine as Russia's invasion of Ukraine grinds into its fifth year. We recently announced a further \$10 million to the Ukraine Energy Support Fund – building on the \$95 million package of defence capability support announced in December. We support all efforts to achieve a lasting peace in Ukraine that upholds Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Check against delivery

Senators, to best position Australian exporters for international uncertainty and shocks, we are focussed on trade diversification and resilience-building measures. We are implementing our new FTA with the UAE, strengthening our trade partnerships with India, and regionally through the CPTPP, RCEP, and PACER Plus.

With the European Union, we are working to complete a comprehensive and balanced deal to bring whole-of economy benefits to Australia.

Chair, allow me to finish on our consular services. The Department is deeply committed to providing consular services with the greatest care to Australians in their time of need.

The latest Consular State of Play launched this month shows the Department provided consular assistance and crisis support in over 26,000 cases in financial year 2024-25. DFAT's 24/7 Emergency Centre answered more than 61,500 calls for help.

This is complex and challenging work and our services consistently rank the highest amongst Commonwealth government agencies in levels of public trust and satisfaction.

Check against delivery

We have acknowledged our recent communication with the families of Holly Morton-Bowles and Bianca Jones regarding legal process in Laos concerning a US citizen in similar circumstances, fell short of these high standards. We remain deeply committed to supporting Holly's and Bianca's parents in their pursuit of justice for Holly and Bianca, and we are making further senior representations to the Lao Government in support of that mission.

Thank you Chair, Senators, for your indulgence.