

5th March 2020

Submission to the Inquiry into Opportunities for strengthening Australia's relations with the Republic of France

Australia has a significant relationship with France, including economic, defence and cultural links. It is worth considering the various avenues in which we can strengthen the Franco-Australian relationship.

Australia and France have a common values commitment to the rules based order, including tackling security challenges such as terrorism and piracy.¹ We also have historical and cultural links through our cooperation in World War I and World War II on French soil and elsewhere. These links have continued through remembrance ceremonies and war history related tourism.

Australia has a deep and enduring defence relationship with France. There are opportunities for strengthening our cooperation to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex global security landscape. Having a strong friendship with France and working together in multilateral forums such as the United Nations will enable Australia to address regional security needs. France has a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, which also includes the right of veto over any resolutions. Hence France has an important role in discussing and coordinating peacekeeping operations, in which Australia could contribute defence personnel and other resources. France has strong engagement and linkages in the Pacific region, including with French Polynesia and New Caledonia. There is already the FRANZ agreement between France, Australia and New Zealand to coordinate humanitarian and disaster relief missions in the Pacific.² This was demonstrated following Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu in 2015.³ The threat of climate change could cause exacerbate security concerns such as food security or migration, and lead to more regular and extreme weather events. This will lead to greater demand on the

¹ Australian Government, *Defence White Paper* (2016), 138.

² *Defence White Paper* (2016), 138.

³ *Defence White Paper* (2016), 138.

Benjamin Cronshaw

2

Australian Defence Force to be involved in disaster relief and other operations in our region.⁴ The involvement of other countries such as France will be welcome to uphold regional security and resilience.

Australia also has an important partnership with France in building our new class of submarines. This indicates trust in their expertise and the strength of our relationship, given the security sensitivity involved. The Collins Class fleet of submarines will be an important asset for Australian defence and naval operations in the Pacific region.

I also support greater Australian engagement with international organisations, such as the OECD and UNESCO headquartered in France, to promote global cooperation on international development and cultural preservation.

I would be interested into the reasons why this inquiry was established into France specifically, and whether there are plans for inquiries for our relationship with other countries. I note that there are several inquiries into our defence and trade relationships with the Pacific island nations, which is welcome given the importance of our near region to Australia.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Kind Regards,

Benjamin Cronshaw.

Bibliography

Australian Government, Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2009 - Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific: Force 2030* (2009).

Australian Government, Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (2016).

⁴ Australian Government, *Defence White Paper 2009* (2009), 40.