

Senate Standing Committee Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Opportunities for Strengthening Australia's Relations with the Republic of France – 26 June 2020

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: SSCFADT - Public Hearing - Opportunities for Strengthening Australia's Relations with the Republic of France - 26 June 2020 - Q3 - Australia-France collaboration on Indo-Pacific security - Kitching

Question reference number: 3

Senator/Member: Kimberley Kitching

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 10 July 2020

Question:

Defence's submission to the inquiry states the French Ministry of Armed Forces' September 2019 strategy, France and Security in the Indo-Pacific, reaffirmed France's commitment to supporting the enduring security and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific:

- a) Is Australia considered in this strategy and if so, how?
- b) Should Australia increase its dialogue and support for France's strategic commitment and objectives in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer:

- a) Australia is considered in this strategy.
 - Australia is listed in the strategy as one of the priority strategic partnerships for France in the Indo-Pacific, including in the foreword by the French Minister for the Armed Forces, Florence Parly.
 - The strategy refers to France's cooperation with Australia and New Zealand through the FRANZ Agreement, which enables the three countries to coordinate humanitarian assistance activities in the South Pacific.
 - Australia is referenced as a member of the Pacific QUAD (Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group), along with France, New Zealand and the United States.
 - Australia is listed as one of France's four most important Indo-Pacific partners in materiel/defence industry cooperation, along with India, Malaysia and Singapore. The Future Submarine Program is used as an example of the importance of the relationship with Australia.

- b) Defence welcomes France's strong strategic commitment to the Indo-Pacific, with the two countries sharing many values, and interests, both in the region and globally. Consistent with this, Defence is committed to exploring and capitalising on opportunities to further strengthen our relationship with France, including through increased dialogue and coordination in support of our common objectives in the Indo-Pacific.