

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 15 March 2023

**Inquiry into 'Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Australian High Commission
Project Abuja, Nigeria'**

Public Hearing

QUESTION 1.

Mr ZAPPIA: Right. Lastly, are you able to tell the committee how many people from Nigeria visit Australia and vice versa each year?

Ms Pitson: I will have to take that on notice. I'm sorry, but I couldn't tell you off the top of my head.

Mr ZAPPIA: If you could, I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

ANSWER:

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) does not hold information on how many people from Nigeria enter Australia (and vice versa).

In consultation with the Department of Home Affairs International Division, as the lead agency who manage this information, Home Affairs have indicated that on average around 4,900 Nigerian nationals arrived in Australia each year between 2015-2019, of which just over 1,600 entered Australia on a visitor visa subclass. In the seven months to 31 January 2023, an estimated 3,600 Nigerians entered Australia, of which nearly 1,200 entered Australia on a visitor visa subclass.

Data on the number of Australians who visit Nigeria is not available.

QUESTION 2.

CHAIR: I might jump in there further to that. I note that Nigeria has a population of 230 million or 240 million and it's a significant resource-rich country. I've got a historical question. Why is Equatorial Guinea not in the area of responsibility for the Abuja post and why is The Gambia? In terms of being contiguous, is it that it is French-speaking, or is there some other reason?

Ms Pitson: I will have to take that on notice and look into that. I will come back to the committee with an answer...

Ms Pitson: ... Chair, I might just answer your question about why Equatorial Guinea wasn't included as part of the north African hub. I'm advised that Equatorial Guinea is serviced out of Madrid, primarily due to the language similarities. Equatorial Guinea is a predominantly Spanish-speaking country.

CHAIR: The Gambia is an English-speaking country; is that why it's part of the Abuja post, even though it's not contiguous? And I thought that Liberia was an English-speaking country?

Ms Pitson: I'm advised that The Gambia is serviced by Abuja to balance coastlines supported by other missions, such as Accra in Ghana, which already supports a number of other countries—eight to nine countries. I think this relates to a balancing of responsibilities across the region and the available posts that we already have in the region, taking into account the predominant language that is spoken in each of those countries.

CHAIR: Right, well—

Ms Pitson: I can provide a more detailed answer on notice.

ANSWER:

Australia's Embassy in Madrid is accredited to Equatorial Guinea as Equatorial Guinea is the only Spanish-speaking nation in Africa.

Australia's High Commissions in Abuja and Accra are accredited to a mix of Anglophone and Francophone countries of West Africa.

Abuja is accredited to Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Niger and The Gambia. Language was not a basis of the decision to allocate The Gambia to Abuja. Instead, the decision was based on the need to balance workloads across our Posts.

Accra is accredited to Ghana, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

QUESTION 3.

Senator VAN: You may need to take this on notice—I'm going to guess not. Over the last 10, or let's maybe stretch it out to 20 years, since you've developed these methodologies, we haven't lost any Australian personnel at a post, have we?

Mr Marshall: I'll take that on notice.

ANSWER:

Since 1 January 2003, there have been two work-related deaths of DFAT Australian personnel at post.

This figure includes AusAid staff prior to the merger.