

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs, defence
and trade 2020-21

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

012 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs, defence and trade – 16 September 2020

Topic: Aid Funding

Question

Where has the \$280 million been redirected from to support Pacific and SE Asia (p.12)

Answer

The government's initial \$280 million COVID-19 response package was developed through identifying investments across the development program that:

- were no longer possible due to COVID-19 travel or movement restrictions
 - for example, Australia Awards scholarships and Australian Volunteers
- were no longer a high priority for partner governments due to COVID-19
 - for example, the postponement of the 2020 Indonesia Development Forum due to COVID-19 allowed some funds from the Knowledge Sector Initiative – which improves evidence available for public policy-making – to be reprioritised toward the Indonesian government's front-line COVID-19 response
- could be reprofiled, to free up funds for the immediate COVID-19 response
 - for example, some multilateral contributions. These commitments still stand, but payments will be made at a later date.

The package was drawn from across the development program, including the Pacific, Southeast Asia, Southwest Asia and Africa, as well as multilateral and sectoral programs.

The funds identified through this process were redirected toward immediate COVID-19 response priorities.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

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Topic: COVID-19 Statistics

Question

Para 1.20 refers to the US confronting one of the world's most serious outbreaks, without specifying the statistical basis of this assertion. What statistics are being used? Is it not more correct to use per capita statistics qualified by the comment that this is based on disclosed figures only, noting that countries like China have not fully disclosed statistics.

Answer

As of 1 October 2020, the [World Health Organization](#), the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (US CDC) and [Johns Hopkins University of Medicine](#) (Johns Hopkins) have all reported that the US has over 7 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and over 200,000 deaths. The US CDC and Johns Hopkins report that the US has approximately 62-63 deaths per 100,000 population. According to [Johns Hopkins](#), this places the US 11th among all countries in terms of deaths per capita.

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Topic: China

Question

Do we have a "China strategy"? in 2018 one was being prepared. When was it finalised? Who prepared it? Can you provide a copy.

Answer

The Government constantly assesses, reviews and adjusts its foreign policy settings and approaches in response to changes in the international environment, including relating to our relationship with China. As the Prime Minister has said publicly, Australia and China have a two-way mutually beneficial relationship. Australia wishes to preserve that. But it can't be preserved in an imbalanced way. It is preserved by each partner respecting each other's interests and outlooks. Australia has been clear and consistent; we will continue to take positions to protect our sovereignty, security and other interests.

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015 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs, defence and trade – 16 September 2020

Topic: Pacific Resilience Fund

Question

Please provide full details of the work that Australia is doing to assist in the establishment of the Pacific Resilience Fund. Noting the evidence given on Wednesday about it being put on 'hold' can you provide details of work undertaken to date, including a timeline for its future establishment.

Answer

We assume you are referring to the Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) coordinated by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

Australia provided \$400,000 to PIFS to support the development of the PRF technical design in 2018/19. In addition to this financial support, Australia has played a constructive role in supporting the development of the proposal as a member of the PRF Technical Working Group. This includes attendance at PRF Technical Working Group meetings (February 2020, July 2019, March 2019), as well as providing advice on the PRF prospectus and governance arrangements at the request of PIFS.

In August 2020, the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) "supported the PRF Transitional Arrangements, and recommend (sic) it to the Forum Officials Committee for endorsement". The Forum Officials' Committee meeting is scheduled for 7 October. The FEMM also "recognised the current uncertainties in the global development financing landscape and agreed to carefully consider and revisit, in consultation with the PRF Technical Working Group, the timing of a global pledging event to capitalise the PRF". The PRF Technical Working Group has not yet considered the timing of the global pledging event. The "self-sustaining design" of the PRF means that it will not be operational until it is capitalised. The PRF prospectus (also endorsed by FEMM) identifies a 1.5 billion USD capitalisation target.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

**016 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs,
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Topic: Office of Development

Question

In the context of answers confirming the ODE is being abolished and absorbed by the DFAT Chief Economist, and concerns about the importance and independence of aid evaluation:

- a) Why is ODE being abolished?
- b) What was the basis for and driver for the decision to abolish ODE?
- c) When was the decision taken to abolish ODE / undertake the organisational changes outlined at the hearing?
- d) Was Minister Payne briefed on the abolition of ODE? If so when? If so did Minister Payne approve the abolition of ODE?
- e) Was Minister Hawke briefed on the abolition of ODE? If so when? If so did Minister Hawke approve the abolition of ODE?
- f) Did this decision to go Cabinet?
- g) Is ODE being abolished due to DFAT budget cuts?
- h) Will the abolition of ODE save money? If so how much?

Answer

- a) The new Performance Framework under the Government's "Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response" introduces significant changes to development program delivery, streamlining planning and reporting, elevating analysis and requiring brevity in the products that underpin it. ODE's evaluations were a valuable contribution, but were only a small part of the development program's performance assessment. While lessons continue to be important to improve program quality, the pace at which lessons are emerging, the required speed of response, and emerging priorities mean large strategic evaluations are no longer the most effective way to respond to emerging needs.
- b) See above.
- c) 11 August 2020.
- d) Yes - through a written brief dated 28 August 2020. The decision was taken by the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- e) Yes - through a written brief dated 28 August 2020. The decision was taken by the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- f) No.
- g) See answer to question a) above.
- h) Yes. Approximately \$0.9 million.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

017 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs, defence and trade – 16 September 2020

Topic: Office of Development Effectiveness

Question

ODE was described in DFAT's 2017 Aid Evaluation Policy as an "operationally independent unit." Is the DFAT Chief Economist an operationally independent unit? If so how and why?

Answer

The Office of the Chief Economist is not an operationally independent unit within DFAT, however it does not have direct responsibilities for implementing the development program and is therefore free from possible conflicts of interest in relation to development program management and performance.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

**018 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs,
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Topic: Office of Development Effectiveness

Question

- a) Can you advise the Committee how many staff were employed in ODE at the end of each financial year since 2014-15?
- b) Can you advise the Committee how many staff are employed in ODE now?
- c) How many teams are there within ODE? Can you provide the most recent organisation chart of ODE before changes started?
- d) Have any staff been moved out of ODE into other areas of the Department over the last 12 months? If so please advise:
 - How many have been moved?
 - Which positions and where they went to.

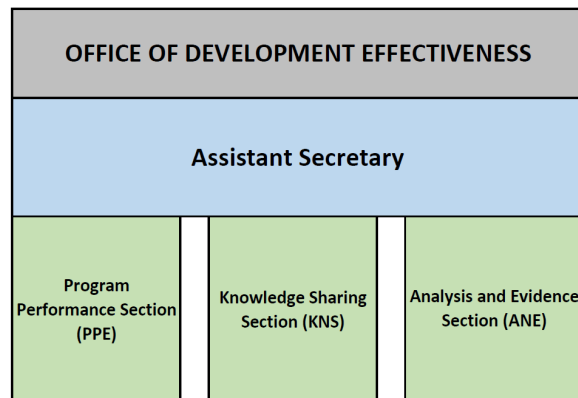
Answer

- a) At the end of each financial year the following number of staff were employed in ODE:
 - FY 2014-15 – 15 officers or 14 full time equivalent (FTE) staff
 - FY 2015-16 – 14 officers or 13.5 FTE staff
 - FY 2016-17 – 15 officers or 13.5 FTE staff
 - FY 2017-18 – 14 officers or 12 FTE staff
 - FY 2018-19 – 14 officers or 12.5 FTE staff
 - FY 2019-20 – 14 officers or 12 FTE staff

FTE indicates the number of active full-time equivalent employees (based on aggregated hours worked by all full-time and part-time employees) at a point in time.

- b) ODE has been closed.
- c) ODE comprised of three sections within a branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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- d) Yes. Three staff were on temporary transfer to assist with the COVID-19 response (one to the Centre for Health Security, one to DFAT's People Division and one to the Department of Health). Following the discontinuation of ODE, all staff were moved to other positions within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Five officers (representing 4.6 FTE staff) were moved to the Aid Evaluation Unit in the Office of the Chief Economist.

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Topic: Office of Development Effectiveness

Question

- a) The Department's website says ODE had planned five strategic evaluations in 2020, covering Multilateral Aid Organisations, Pacific Economic Infrastructure, Conflict Prevention, Literacy in Melanesia and Flexible and Adaptive Aid Management – is that correct?
- b) DFAT's website "ODE has suspended its evaluations to pivot work towards supporting DFAT's COVID response." When were the 2020 ODE strategic evaluations suspended?
- c) How long have they been suspended for?
- d) Will the five strategic evaluations still be completed?
- e) Will they be publicly released when they are completed?
- f) For each of the five suspended 2020 strategic evaluations, can you advise the Committee: what work had been undertaken prior to the suspension; whether any draft texts for the evaluation reports had been completed; whether any consultants or outside experts had been involved and, if any external consultants had been involved, what have been the costs incurred?
- g) What is the COVID Real Time Monitoring Project and how does ODE contribute to this project?

Answer

- a) Yes.
- b) All ODE evaluations were suspended in March 2020.
- c) As of September 2020, six months.
- d) Summaries of some of these evaluations will be completed and published. See answer below.
- e) Summaries of Pacific Economic Infrastructure and Conflict Prevention strategic evaluations will be publicly released. The evaluations will also be circulated to DFAT staff in draft form. The Multilateral Aid Organisations strategic evaluation will be circulated to DFAT staff in draft form. The Literacy in Melanesia and Flexible and Adaptive Aid Management strategic evaluations were at concept stage when paused in March 2020, and will not be progressed further.
- f) Work was at various stages for each of the suspended strategic evaluations. Drafts of three of the suspended strategic evaluations had been completed: Multilateral Aid Organisations, Pacific Economic Infrastructure, and Conflict Prevention. Consultants were hired for all three of these strategic evaluations. External costs were: Multilateral

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Aid Organisations (\$303,694), Pacific Economic Infrastructure (\$546,212), and Conflict Prevention (\$441,324). The Literacy in Melanesia evaluation was being scoped with consultants (\$11,630) and the Flexible and Adaptive Aid Management evaluation was being scoped without consultants when paused in March 2020.

- g) DFAT's COVID-19 Real Time Monitoring and Evaluation Project was led by ODE. Its purpose was to provide rapid feedback to the Department's Senior Executive team on strengths, weaknesses and solutions in DFAT's COVID-19 response. ODE drew on interviews, surveys, observations, and document review. The project focused on the Department's COVID-19 Business Continuity Priorities and its economic and international development response to COVID-19.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

020 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs, defence and trade – 16 September 2020

Topic: Independent Evaluation Committee

Question

- a) What is the role of the Independent Evaluation Committee in evaluating the effectiveness of Australia's aid investments?
- b) You advised the Committee that the Independent Evaluation Committee still exists but that you can't guarantee it will in the future. Who are the members of the Independent Evaluation Committee? Which of these members are external from DFAT? Does the IEC have any members who are internal from DFAT? Who are they?
- c) When did the Independent Evaluation Committee last meet?
- d) According to the Federal Government Online Directory, the chair of the committee was Mr Jim Adams and his term expired on 30 April 2019. Has Mr Adams been replaced? Does the Minister intend to appoint a new chair of the Independent Evaluation Committee?
- e) Why has there not been a chair for the last 16 months?
- f) The Government Online Directory shows Dr Wendy Jarvie was a member of the committee and her term expired on 30 April 2020. Is that correct?
- g) Does the Minister intend to appoint a replacement for Dr Jarvie?
- h) The Government Online Directory shows the only current member of the Independent Evaluation Committee is Mr Stephen Creese and that his term is due to expire on 5 March 2021 – is that correct? Will Mr Creese be replaced when his term expires next March? Is DFAT concerned that Mr Creese will be left to talk to himself as the Committee appears to comprise of one person?

Answer

- a) The evaluation of the effectiveness of Australia's aid investments is principally undertaken by program areas. The Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC) was an external advisory body. The IEC's role was to advise and endorse the work carried out by the former Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE), including endorsing the ODE work plan, its performance analysis products and its strategic evaluations.
- b) The IEC has been discontinued. Its membership consisted of three external members and the Deputy Secretary Global Cooperation, Development and Partnerships Group of DFAT.
- c) 05 December 2019.
- d) No. The IEC has been discontinued.

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- e) Appointments of the independent external members of the IEC were made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- f) Yes.
- g) No.
- h) The IEC has been discontinued.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

**021 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs,
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Topic: COVID-19 Vaccine

Question

Regarding the Government's announcement of \$80 million for the Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment:

- a) Is the \$80 million for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment [Attachment 6] coming out of the existing Official Development Assistance budget?
- b) Will the \$80 million for the Advance Market Commitment come out of Australia's \$300 million contribution to Gavi's replenishment round announced in June or will it be on top of the \$300 million contribution to Gavi's replenishment [Attachment 7]?

Answer

- a) Yes
- b) No. Australia's \$80 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment is in addition to Australia's \$300 million core contribution to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Hansard

**022 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs,
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Topic: Independent Evaluation Committee

Senator Hill

Question

Mr HILL: I will put a few more questions on notice about the ODE. Does the Independent Evaluation Committee still exist?

Ms Klugman: The Independent Evaluation Committee has played an important role. I am not in a position to give you any definitive advice about the future of the Independent Evaluation Committee at this time.

Mr HILL: But does it still exist? Does it exist right now? Is it a thing or is it not a thing?

Ms Klugman: The Independent Evaluation Committee still exists.

Answer

The Independent Evaluation Committee has been discontinued as at 25 September 2020.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Hansard

**023 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs,
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Topic: WHO

Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Question

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I have expressed concerns publicly about the World Health Assembly motion, which has been considerably watered down. In any case, it is not about possibility, it is about information-gathering more than anything. I'm concerned, firstly, about the recent reports that the so-called independent team from the WHO visited China but didn't go to Wuhan; and secondly, about emerging claims—particularly from people who were in Wuhan, the most recent one being Dr Yan—that COVID was made in a Wuhan laboratory. Do we persist in our confidence in what the WHO is doing and what this investigation is doing? I would have thought that the first place you would visit if you went to China would be Wuhan. Mr Lee, you were talking about the independence and lauding process. I have some grave concerns about it. At what point are we going to say, 'This is not as independent as we're making out it to be'?

Ms Klugman: As Mr Lee and Ms Peak said earlier, we are watching very closely how the WHO proceeds with this inquiry. We have come to a conclusion that it is strongly in Australia's interest to lean into this process—and that is precisely what we are doing. On the details of how the investigation has been staged out, our ambassadors in Geneva and elsewhere, through our diplomatic network and from headquarters, are closely tracking the process and making our views clearly known, as are other member states of the WHO, as this process goes ahead.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Considering that we have taken considerable 'ownership', I would hope that we are considering and looking at this process very carefully.

Ms Klugman: We are.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I personally—I am not asking you to express a view—have grave concerns about the way this is progressing. At what point will we look at this process, particularly given recent events, and start activating? What can we actually do? That is more to the point. Could you take that on notice?

Answer

Progress has been made to take forward the World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution on the COVID-19 response, co-sponsored by 145 countries, including Australia. The Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response has been formed and the co-chairs have been appointed, former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Helen Clark and former President of Liberia,

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Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The Panel has selected its membership and finalised its terms of reference, which closely mirror the WHA resolution. The Panel has committed to providing an interim report to the WHA in November 2020 and a substantive report in May 2021.

Australia continues to make direct representations to the WHO for sustained momentum on this work.

See also Answer QoN26, providing an update on the WHO's progress in investigating the zoonotic source of COVID-19 in accordance with the mandate provided by the WHA resolution on the COVID-19 response.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Hansard

**024 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs,
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Topic: Pacific Resilience Fund

Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Question

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Can you take this on notice: in your paragraph 1.16 you refer to 'climate resilience infrastructure'. It sounds to me like none of that is particularly climate-related. I come back to my pet subject, the Pacific Resilience Fund. Where are we with that? Do we still have any plans to support that fund? If so, are we going to look at some of the projects that are envisaged as part of the Pacific Resilience Fund?

Ms Heinecke: On the first question, yes, the really strong theme is not only the economic impact of ASIP, but also the environmental impact. The first two projects that have been approved and publicly announced both have a strong environmental flavour. The first one, Tina River, is a hydropower site.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I am fully aware of that. I actually visited the Tina River project at its conception and travelled over the project with Dr Verghese. So I'm fully aware of what the projects are. We're talking about the Pacific Resilience Fund and how it was envisaged that they would be small climate-proofing, weatherproofing projects. So I understand the big project stuff. Can you take on notice full details of everything that you have spent so far? Can you also give to me a breakdown of what was spent on the \$1 billion EPIC component of it? And now I want to ask you a specific question about the Pacific Resilience Fund and what you are doing in relation to that.

Ms Heinecke: As you can imagine, the Pacific itself is now facing other priorities in terms of the COVID response and they've actually put the call to fund the Pacific Resilience Fund on hold. And that was a decision that was taken by Pacific governments.

CHAIR: If you could address Senator Fierravanti-Wells's questions on notice, that would be good.

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Answer

Responses to questions about the Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) are included in QON15.

In relation to the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP), all infrastructure projects will be built to be climate and disaster resilient. The AIFFP also finances projects that support renewable and lower emissions energy generation and transmission. AIFFP financing for the Markham Valley Solar Project and the Tina River Hydropower Transmission System are examples of this.

The AIFFP is in the process of negotiating and finalising a number of agreements with sovereign partners and has signed non-disclosure agreements with potential private sector partners. Once projects have been approved and agreements have been signed, additional details will be available on the AIFFP's website.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Hansard

**025 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs,
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Topic: PPE

Senator Fawcett

Question

CHAIR: Just a final question from me, which you can take on notice. We've had a lot of evidence to this committee about the need to step up capabilities in terms of producing things like PPE, to keep that sustainable. We need a whole-of-government approach to procuring things like N95 respirators and surgical masks from the Australian manufacturers to give them the offtake agreements to keep them going. You've mentioned in your submission in a number of places that you're providing PPE—I think 15 tonnes was the figure that was used—into our region. I would just be interested to know where you are currently purchasing from and what agreements or arrangements you are putting in place to support Australian manufacturers, so you play a part as a whole-of-government procurement effort to give offtake agreements that will keep our own manufacturers viable into the future.

Ms Klugman: I'm happy to provide that on notice.

Answer

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) sources and procures supplies through a commercial contract to support responses to overseas crises, including the potential health crises that could emerge due to COVID-19.

Supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) are sourced on DFAT's behalf from both Australian and international suppliers, as part of meeting the Australian Government's immediate support to the region and need to build a suitable contingency stockpile of PPE. This PPE is stored at DFAT's humanitarian supplies warehouse in Brisbane, ready to be deployed in response to COVID-19 needs that emerge in countries in our region.

The choice of suppliers of PPE, as with all of our humanitarian supplies, is influenced by price, and the ability to meet deadlines. In the extremely difficult procurement environment for PPE that existed (and persists to a certain extent) following the emergence of COVID 19, procurement options were frequently severely limited.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE / Hansard

**026 – Inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs,
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Topic: WHO

Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Question

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: So clearly, therefore, in meeting the requirements of that motion, I'm very concerned with the recent reports that the WHO are supposed to be investigating and complying with that motion. They've decided to go to China but they're not even going to Wuhan. One would assume that, for any proper investigation in accordance with that motion, one would have to look at the interactions of the different systems and would have to look at the interactions of the human-animal environment interface, as you say in your submission. Without that, can we have any faith that the WHO is actually investigating in accordance with the requirements of this motion?

Prof. Campbell: That would be a question for my DFAT colleagues from the Centre for Health Security. As you know, ACIAR is a research investor and not involved in the policy or diplomatic response.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Okay. We might direct that question to the Centre for Health Security. Thank you.

Answer

The World Health Assembly resolution on the COVID-19 response (WHA73.1) mandated the World Health Organization (WHO) to 'continue to work closely with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and countries, as part of the One-Health Approach, to identify the zoonotic source of the virus and the route of introduction to the human population, including through efforts such as scientific and collaborative field missions'.

The WHO has been progressing this work as mandated by the resolution. Two WHO officials completed a preliminary mission to China from 11 July – 3 August to prepare the terms of reference and program of work for a further, more detailed international mission. The WHO has advised that the work will progress in two phases. In phase one, a team of international experts will support Chinese researchers remotely to identify the potential source of infection of the early cases, including epidemiological and other interactions between animal and environmental studies. Phase two will involve an international field mission to guide in-depth

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assessments in humans and animal populations informed by phase one studies. The WHO has indicated that the international field mission will visit Wuhan.

Beyond the international mission, the WHO continues to work closely with the FAO and OIE on progressing the mandate provided by the WHA.

Australia continues to make direct representations to the WHO for sustained momentum on this work.