



Improving access to print material for the vision impaired

A treaty designed to help blind and vision impaired people access a broader range of print material was one of the subjects of a report released today by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.

The Marrakesh Treaty facilitates access to published works for people who are vision impaired and Committee Chair, Mr Wyatt Roy MP, said that it is vitally important that those with a print disability have equal access to print material - not just entertainment but technical material as well.

"There are over 300,000 vision impaired people in Australia, but only five per cent of written material is available in a format they can access," Mr Roy said.

In recommending that Australia take binding treaty action, the committee balanced the benefit of access to this material against protecting the interests of copyright holders.

The report also considered a treaty between Australia and the European Union which provides a framework for Australian deployments to EU-led international crisis management operations, such as counter piracy operations in Somalia and civilian security reform in Ukraine.

Mr Roy said that Australia wants to make an effective contribution to crisis management operations undertaken by our international partners and this treaty will enable us to respond more quickly and efficiently.

"Rather than having to negotiate ad hoc arrangements each time the Australian Government decides to participate in a crisis management operation, the agreement will allow Australian personnel to respond in an efficient manner," he said.

Also considered within the report is the ratification of decisions made at the 2012 Universal Postal Union (UPU) Congress.

The UPU, which is the United Nations agency responsible for the international mail system, decided on a range of amendments to their governing instruments on topics such as postal security measures, the protection of personal data and live animal transportation.

The full report is available on the committee's website: <http://www.aph.gov.au/jsct> or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

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