

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade
Opportunities for strengthening Australia's relations with the Republic of France

QoN Number: 02

Subject: Interaction with the OECD

Asked by: Kimberley Kitching

Question:

CHAIR: Lovely. Just on the OECD, how does Home Affairs interact with the OECD?
Mr Hodgens: We have a working group engagement—it is a participant member type engagement—but we also have it at the organisational level. We have, I guess, direct representation through membership into the FATF, which carries across in many respects, and discussion wise, as I talked about earlier with that interwoven engagement. My exposure to it, unfortunately, has been anecdotal from speaking with colleagues. As you would note from even a cursory view across our portfolio it's rather expansive. What I can do is offer to come back to you on notice with those formal engagement points and organisations if you'd like.

CHAIR: Yes, that would be fantastic. So, what is the engagement, what are the key priorities and what are the challenges that Home Affairs faces in achieving these priorities—and there may be none; I just don't know—and what can we do to build on the relationship through the Department of Home Affairs' engagement with the OECD and other bodies? It's just that the OECD is headquartered in Paris.

Mr Hodgens: Absolutely, and we'll certainly come back to you with those details. Just on your point in terms of challenges, to my knowledge, apart from logistical challenges, from my limited experience with those working into the OECD, their observations are that we are very warmly received. The principal merit for us, I would argue, of participation in that construct is the capacity to enfranchise ourselves and build like-minded—I don't want to use the word 'coalitions'—groupings of interest that support important issues. My understanding is that our views and our approaches are generally very well received in that environment.

Answer:

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) leads Australia's Permanent Delegation to the OECD in Paris. Home Affairs' officers based in London and Brussels participate in OECD committees and other forums on an ad-hoc basis, supported by officials in Canberra as appropriate. Home Affairs participates in the following OECD committees, forums and working groups:

- Working Party on Migration,
- High Level Risk Forum,
- Network of Communication Officers on Migration, and the
- Financial Action Task Force.

The key priorities for Home Affairs' engagement with the OECD are listed in paragraph 14 of the submission. The lead areas within Home Affairs responsible for supporting Australia's engagement with the OECD include:

- International Policy Division,
- Online Harms Policy Branch,
- Transnational Crime Policy Branch,
- Immigration Policy Framework Branch,
- Assurance Risk and Engagement Branch, and
- Emergency Management Australia.

Home Affairs has a productive working relationship with the OECD and actively collaborates with our colleagues across government (including DFAT) to advance Australia's interests.

While the COVID-19 period has introduced challenges for all international engagement, Home Affairs has maintained connections through virtual interaction with the OECD, and looks forward to the eventual relaxation of travel restrictions, that will enable a reinvigoration of this engagement.