



PARLIAMENT of AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TREATIES

Report tabled

Issue date: 19 June 2017

Australian women on the front line

Australia will withdraw an outdated reservation to the gender discrimination convention following endorsement by the [Joint Standing Committee on Treaties](#).

The Committee tabled its 171st report today, approving the text of three separate agreements, including approving the [withdrawal of Australia's reservation](#) to the [Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW). This reservation was made in 1986 to allow the ADF to bar women from combat roles.

As of 1 January 2016, all gender restrictions from the Australian Defence Force combat roles have been removed. Women now have equal opportunities to apply and be considered for all positions.

The Chair of the Committee, [the Hon Stuart Robert MP](#), explained that the change in defence policy makes the reservation to the Convention unnecessary.

"The original reservation no longer reflects government policy nor the expectations of the Australian community. The Committee strongly supports the withdrawal of the reservation and the commitments of successive governments to gender equality within the Australian Defence Force," Mr Robert said.

"There is still a significant road ahead before gender balance is achieved within the Australian Defence Force. Yet there is no shortage of talented women in the Australian military and the Australian Defence Force should embrace it fully. While not every woman will be capable of serving in combat roles, neither is every man. Access to such roles should be based on merit and ability, not gender."

Report 171 reviewed two other treaty actions including:

- [Amendments to Appendices I and II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#)
- [Generation IV Nuclear Energy Systems - Accession](#)

The Committee's report (Report 171) is available [online](#).

About the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

The Committee is responsible for advising the Parliament of whether proposed treaties are in Australia's national interest, and identify possible issues, particularly with implementation, that must be addressed.



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The Committee hears and receives evidence from both departments and the community to get a broad range of views of the potential impact of proposed international agreements.

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