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Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

Topic: FADT References Committee – Democracy and Human Rights in Myanmar – Written questions on notice

Senator Raff Ciccone

Question

1. Did Australia issue a statement to mark the fifth anniversary of the elections on 1 February? Can you please take me through the content of that statement?

Answer

On 1 February 2026 the Foreign Minister issued a statement on behalf of the Australian Government. The text of the statement is as follows:

Today marks five years since the Myanmar military overthrew the democratically elected government. Since 1 February 2021, the people of Myanmar have endured escalating violence, widespread human rights violations and severe humanitarian suffering.

This crisis, caused by the coup, continues unabated. In 2026, an estimated 16.2 million people will require lifesaving humanitarian assistance, and over 3.6 million people are internally displaced due to ongoing conflict. The economy has contracted significantly, and transnational and serious organised crime has flourished, threatening regional stability.

Recent regime elections were held amid ongoing violence and repression, and without meaningful participation from opposition parties. They did not meet the conditions for free, fair and inclusive elections.

Australia has consistently condemned the regime's brutal and ongoing atrocities against the people of Myanmar, and we will continue to judge the Myanmar military by its actions. We continue to support ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus as the framework for addressing the situation in Myanmar and urge for its full implementation.

We look to the incoming Myanmar authorities to put in place measures that reflect the Five-Point Consensus, including the cessation of violence against civilians; safe and unhindered access to humanitarian support, without discrimination, for all those in need; and a commitment to genuine and inclusive dialogue amongst all stakeholders. We continue to call for the release of all those unjustly detained.

Australia is ready to support genuine efforts to alleviate humanitarian suffering, improve economic and social conditions and advance a sustainable resolution to the ongoing crisis.

We stand with the people of Myanmar, and share their ambitions for a better future.

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Question

2. Has Australia previously taken a public position on the elections? Can you outline that statement if so?

Answer

On 10 December 2025 the Australian Government issued a Statement on Myanmar. The text of that statement is as follows:

The Australian Government has grave concerns about the ongoing political and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. Australia condemns widespread human rights abuses and violations by the Myanmar military regime, and remains deeply concerned by its ongoing attacks against civilians including airstrikes. We also note with concern credible reports of violence and abuses committed by other armed actors.

Australia has consistently maintained that a genuine path to peace requires an end to violence, the release of all those unjustly detained and inclusive dialogue among all Myanmar stakeholders.

We are seriously concerned that elections held without these conditions will lead to greater instability and prevent a peaceful resolution to the ongoing crisis, with grave consequences for the people of Myanmar. The current situation in Myanmar falls short of what is needed for free, fair and inclusive elections.

Australia will continue to urge a peaceful transition of power to a democratic civilian government that reflects the will of the people. We reiterate our strong support for ASEAN's central role in resolving this crisis. We continue to call on the regime to fulfil its commitments under the Five-Point Consensus and to engage meaningfully with ASEAN representatives including the ASEAN Chair's Special Envoy.

Our commitment to universal human rights reflects our national values. Australia will continue to stand with the people of Myanmar, who have demonstrated great resilience and bravery in the face of adversity.

Question

3. Has Australia regularly issued statements regarding the conduct of the Myanmar regime? Can you give me a flavour of some of those statements?

Answer

Australia regularly issues statements expressing concern about the situation in Myanmar. We consistently urge the regime to cease violence, release those unjustly detained, allow unimpeded humanitarian access and engage in inclusive dialogue. Recent statements include:

- On 1 February 2026, the Foreign Minister issued a statement on the fifth anniversary of the coup, noting that elections did not meet the conditions for free, fair and inclusive elections.
- On 10 December 2025, DFAT issued a statement on Human Rights Day condemning the Myanmar military regime's widespread human rights abuses and violations.
- On 30 September 2025, Australian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, James Larson delivered a statement outlining Australia's concerns at the UN High-Level Conference on Rohingya.
- On 25 August 2025, DFAT issued a statement to mark the eighth anniversary of the Myanmar military's attacks against Rohingyas.

Australia also consistently raises concerns about the human rights situation in Myanmar in the UN Human Rights Council, including on 8 September 2025 at HRC60, 27 June 2025 at HRC59, 19 March and 28 February 2025 at HRC58.

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Question

4. Does Australia currently have an Ambassador in Myanmar?

Answer

No. Australia has been represented at Chargé d’Affaires level since May 2022.

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Question

5. Why doesn't Australia have an Ambassador?

Answer

Following the coup, the decision was taken that Chargé d'Affaires was the appropriate level for Australia's representation in Myanmar.

Question

6. Can you please take me through Australia's development assistance to Myanmar at a high level?

Answer

Australia is committed to supporting the people of Myanmar through our international advocacy and our development and humanitarian assistance. The Australia – Myanmar Development Partnership Plan 2024–2029 (DPP) sets out our overarching goal for a prosperous, resilient and stable Myanmar. The DPP sets out four development and humanitarian objectives:

- Support efforts to mitigate conflict and its effects, and protect space for longer-term progress on human rights, rule of law, democratic space, and gender equality and social inclusion.
- Build resilience in vulnerable communities by supporting health, education, livelihood and climate change adaptation needs.
- Build the leadership and skills of the people of Myanmar, and strengthen our people-to-people links.
- Effectively respond to the humanitarian needs of those affected by conflict, disasters and displacement.

Australia is providing an estimated \$124.8 million in Official Development Assistance to Myanmar in 2025–2026. This consists of \$45.1 million in bilateral development program funding, \$9.4 million in regional programs and \$70.2 million in global funding. Since 2017, Australia has committed over \$1.26 billion in humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar, and displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh and their host communities. This includes a new three-year program of up to \$370 million which commenced in 2026. Australia does not provide any direct funding to the military regime, and we take proactive steps to ensure our assistance to Myanmar neither goes to the regime nor lends it credibility or legitimacy.

Our humanitarian program addresses immediate, life-saving needs and helps to improve communities' resilience to future shocks. The bilateral development program is focused on longer-term improvement and the provision of essential services. We work through proven partners including the United Nations and non-government organisations.

Question

7. Has our aid program overall been effective at helping the people of Myanmar in difficult circumstances?

Answer

Despite working in very difficult circumstances, our development and humanitarian programs have been able to achieve meaningful outcomes for the people of Myanmar.

Our partners remain able to deliver much-needed assistance to people, often working with local organisations in hard-to-reach areas. In 2024-25, this included:

- Providing life-saving assistance, including distributing basic food and non-food items, emergency food, water and shelter.
- Delivering basic education services to children living in vulnerable and conflict affected communities.
- Improving the nutrition status and food security of populations in conflict affected areas through agricultural and livelihoods assistance.
- Delivering primary health care, essential health supplies and mental health services through local non-government organisations.
- A strong focus on gender equality by providing frontline services to improve women's health and well-being including obstetrics and maternal and child health care, and access to gender-based violence support and counselling.
- Supporting efforts to mitigate conflict and its impacts and help protect space for longer-term progress on human rights, rule of law and democracy.
- Providing immediate humanitarian relief following the earthquake in March 2025, including provision of health services, water and sanitation, food, shelter and rehabilitation with a focus on assistance for women and girls and people with a disability.

We maintain a focus on learning within and between our programs to improve implementation.

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Question

8. Why doesn't DFAT disclose details of all the partners you work with?

Answer

In the spirit of transparency, DFAT has released information on our development and humanitarian programs in Myanmar through the DFAT Transparency Portal.

Noting the sensitivities and security situation in Myanmar, the government does not publicise the details of our implementing partners. Many of our partners have requested their names not be released publicly due to the risk of reprisals against their staff, operations, downstream partners and beneficiaries from the Myanmar military regime.

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Question

9. Can I confirm that DFAT's aid program reaches every state in Myanmar?

Answer

Yes.

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Question

10. What is the value of Australia's diplomatic presence in Myanmar?

Answer

Australia has had diplomatic relations with Myanmar since 1952. Our presence allows Australia to monitor the situation in country, including on issues relevant to Australia's national interests across conflict, security and transnational crime, and convey concerns as appropriate to authorities. The mission supports Australian advocacy in multilateral forums and with countries in the region on issues of mutual interest and concern. Our presence allows us to support the people of Myanmar through our development and humanitarian assistance, and maintain an important consular function.

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Question

11. How would you characterise Australia's relationship with Myanmar post-coup?

Answer

Australia has maintained diplomatic relations with Myanmar but sought to avoid conferring legitimacy on Myanmar's military regime. We have strictly limited our engagement with the regime to only that which is necessary to pursue our core national interests. We have conveyed our concerns where appropriate, including to press for the cessation of violence, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, the release of those unjustly detained, and inclusive dialogue. We have consistently condemned the widespread human rights abuses and violations by the military regime and remain deeply concerned by ongoing attacks against civilians, including airstrikes. We are committed to supporting the people of Myanmar through our international advocacy and our development and humanitarian assistance.

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Question

12. Do we discuss our aid program with likeminded partners in Myanmar?

Answer

Yes. We take part in consultative and coordination mechanisms with likeminded donors, and co-fund several investments.

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Question

13. Does the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have any engagement with the National Unity Government?

Answer

DFAT officials engage with National Unity Government (NUG) representatives and democratic groups as opportunities arise. DFAT regularly engages with the NUG representative to Australia, Dr Tun Aung Shwe.

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Question

14. Why does the Department engage with the NUG?

Answer

We appreciate the importance of understanding the many voices for democracy both within and outside of Myanmar.

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Question

15. Has the Foreign Minister had any engagement with the NUG?

Answer

Yes. On 17 November 2025 and on 4 June 2024, Minister Wong met with NUG Union Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zin Mar Aung and NUG Representative to the Commonwealth of Australia, Dr Tun.

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Question

16. What are Australia's current sanctions settings against the Myanmar military regime?

Answer

As part of the response to the crisis in Myanmar, Australia has autonomous sanctions to impose costs on the military regime. The sanctions are designed to limit access to funds and materiel that enable the regime to continue committing atrocities against its own people. Australia's sanctions include an arms embargo, targeted financial sanctions (including on commercial entities with direct links to the military and on two state-owned banks) and travel bans. Australia has sanctioned 21 individuals and 7 entities. These are contained in the publicly available Consolidated List, which is kept and maintained by the Department. We keep our sanctions against Myanmar under review, in close consultation with other like-minded partners.

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17. Have any ASEAN members, or Japan and Korea applied sanctions on the regime?

Answer

No. The Republic of Korea has sanctioned transnational crime organisations operating in Southeast Asia, including in Myanmar, but has not sanctioned the regime.

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Question

18. Compared to our neighbours in the region, is Australia is unique in having applied autonomous sanctions against the Myanmar military regime?

Answer

Yes. No countries in the region have applied autonomous sanctions against the Myanmar military regime. The US, UK, Canada and the EU have imposed several tranches of sanctions on Myanmar since 1 February 2021. New Zealand has imposed travel bans on members of the Myanmar State Administration Council.

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Question

19. Do you see any other methods of applying pressure on the regime, apart from sanctions (or NUG recognition)?

Answer

The Australian Government continues to use every lever at our disposal – bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally – to press the regime for the cessation of violence, the release of those unjustly detained, unimpeded humanitarian access and a return to the path of democracy. Australia will continue its advocacy efforts in a range of international fora including through ASEAN and the United Nations Human Rights Council. We will continue to cooperate with others who share our concerns to maintain attention on the situation and press for an improvement in conditions. Australia will also continue to support the important work of international efforts, including the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar. Australia will maintain its longstanding policy of recognising states not governments.