

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: 01

Subject: Top five priorities for engagement with the OECD

Asked by: Eric Abetz

Question:

Senator ABETZ: Yes, if I may. Thank you for your submissions, both written and oral. I will take you to your written submission, which is submission 18. In paragraph 14, you have five subparagraphs. Are you able to flesh them out a bit more in relation to your engagement with the OECD? When did that focus on those five areas commence? It's very important that you are focusing on those areas. Good on you for identifying them. But one assumes that that would not have been the focus 10 or 15 years ago, so are you able to give us a brief outline as to when each of those five areas became a focus of attention and then how the security framework or the engagement with others, such as the OECD, has changed over recent years?

Mr Hodgens: Thank you for that. I'll certainly do the best I can in answering that. It is a little outside my area of expertise and certainly predates my arrival in this role. What I can say with confidence is that these issues are particularly strongly expressed by Minister Dutton, not just through the OECD but also through every other like-minded grouping with which I am involved and to whom I have had the great pleasure of providing support. As you noted earlier, given my remit, that is a relatively substantial group. It's certainly very strongly felt, and we are certainly seeking to build consensus for not just agreement and support but action towards progressing each of these respective issues. In particular respect of each of them, I may well have to take that on notice, with my apologise, just to provide you with the accuracy you're seeking.

Senator ABETZ: Look, don't bother if it occasions any amount of work. If it's readily available when you inquire, fine. If not, don't bother. Spend your time doing better things. It's just a matter of interest.

Mr Hodgens: I'll certainly seek to pursue it for you and, if it is readily available, most definitely get it to you and the chair. But, as is probably reflected in the paragraphs immediately above the one to which you refer, and perhaps taking that a little wider, there is a very strong relationship between FATF and the OECD. The comment that I would make is that there is very noticeably an interwoven relationship between not just the issues but the forums that are seeking to address these issues. In many respects it is reassuring that the global community, and certainly those who we consider like-minded, appear to be taking every possible opportunity and exploiting every avenue they can to progress whatever action is possible through the

respective remits and authorities of those groups in order to address these in some cases quite horrendous issues.

Answer:

Australia's engagement with the OECD on the topics raised in paragraph 14, has been long standing and pre-date the creation of the Department of Home Affairs on 20 December 2017. The focus of engagement was refined to the five listed areas following a collaborative efforts between Home Affairs, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and others in September 2019 that sought to identify how engagement with the OECD enhanced the ability for agencies to achieve their strategic priorities.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 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.

Further detail on the top five priorities and how Home Affairs is advancing work in these areas is articulated in the *Blueprint for Home Affairs* at <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/commitments/files/blueprint-for-home-affairs.pdf>.