

Outcome 3

4.1 DFAT describes Outcome 3 as focusing on:

A secure Australian Government presence overseas through the provision of security services and information and communications technology infrastructure and the management of the Commonwealth's overseas owned estates.¹

4.2 This outcome is concerned with effective security procedures in protecting Australian Government personnel and consular posts overseas. In doing so, DFAT aims to manage overseas networks in an efficient and effective manner, including its owned overseas estates.

4.3 Issues raised in relation to Outcome 3 and its Program included:

- the potential role of e-diplomacy in DFAT's enhancement of security measures; and
- the management of the Overseas Owned Estate.

E-diplomacy and communications security

4.4 As mentioned in Chapter 2, e-diplomacy is concerned with the use of internal and external communication by the Department in improving the efficiency and facilitation of information. It is the use of web and information and communication technologies (ICT) to help carry out diplomatic objectives.

1 DFAT Annual Report 2009–10, p. 172.

- 4.5 In June 2010, DFAT completed the installation of a new internet gateway. The aim is to further enhance security and provide greater ease of access for the department's remote working capability.²
- 4.6 In addition, the department completed the three-year ICT Asset-Refresh program. Through this program the department enhanced its communications to missions, and ensured the continuity of reliable communications in high-risk environment.³
- 4.7 However the level of risk involved in the utilisation of e-diplomacy may compromise the security of the department. Mr Hanson noted that there is a level of necessary modest risk involved in the effective utilisation of e-diplomacy.⁴
- 4.8 Mr Mirchandani told the Committee about governments which have attempted to impose controls and censorship on new media. In particular:
- The US has attempted to gain legal control over Twitter accounts to find out who leaked what to whom. More recently in the UK we have seen attempts to sue Twitter for revealing names in what has been called the 'super junction' case.⁵
- 4.9 DFAT told the Committee that the department has cautiously engaged with e-diplomacy and will continue to be tentative in its approach. It will continue its limited engagement with e-diplomacy in relation to security.⁶
- 4.10 DFAT added that the information security of the department had been systematically reviewed. Consequently, DFAT was confident that the leaking of documents as experienced within the US is unlikely.⁷

Overseas property

- 4.11 Australian Government-owned property overseas accounts for 400 properties in 60 locations, with a value totalling \$1.7 billion. It is managed by the Overseas Property Office (OPO). DFAT is the largest tenant, accounting for 65% of all rent collected.

2 DFAT Annual Report 2009-10, p. 176.

3 DFAT Annual Report 2009-10, p. 176.

4 Mr Fergus Hanson, *Exhibit No. 1*, p. 14.

5 Mr Prakash Mirchandani, *Transcript*, 23 May 2011, p. 18.

6 Mr Dennis Richardson, *Transcript*, 27 May 2011, p. 21.

7 Mr Dennis Richardson, *Transcript*, 23 May 2011, p. 22.

- 4.12 The overseas property special account is an operation funded by the income generated from the rents paid to the OPO. It is a self-funding service that distributes the surplus attained from the rent to properties in need of refurbishment.⁸
- 4.13 This account has been used for the midlife upgrades of properties in Wellington, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. DFAT told the Committee that Paris and Washington will soon undergo their midlife upgrades.⁹
- 4.14 It was noted during the review that the current Australian embassy in Brussels was not of a reputable standard.
- 4.15 DFAT told the Committee that the current lease for the embassy in Brussels was coming to an end. As such, it was currently identifying and negotiating a new building to serve as the new Australian embassy in that city.¹⁰

Committee comment

- 4.16 The Committee notes DFAT's satisfaction with how it responds to these issues but cautions that with continuous reporting of cyber warfare issues involving all Industrialised countries including Australia,¹¹ DFAT needs to be alert to the security of its e-network.

8 Ms Ann Thorpe, *Transcript 27 May 2011*, p. 22.

9 Mr Stephan Candotti, *Transcript, 27 May 2011*, p. 23.

10 Mr Stephan Candotti, *Transcript, 27 May 2011*, p. 21.

11 <<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/national/australia-cyber-security-weak-report/story-e6freuzr-12255999922298>> Accessed June 2011.

