



Treaties reports on the rights of people with disabilities, NATO information security and British Virgin Islands taxation

The Chair of the Parliament's Treaties Committee, Kelvin Thomson MP, released *Report 98* and *Report 99* today that review six proposed treaty actions, including:

- the Optional Protocol to Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- an agreement between the Australia and NATO on the Security of Information; and
- two taxation agreements with the British Virgin Islands.

The Committee recommended that binding treaty action be taken on two taxation agreements with the British Virgin Islands. The Committee determined that the Agreements will establish consistent standards of tax governance between the two nations and will assist international efforts to combat offshore tax evasion.

The Committee heard evidence that the Tax Office expects to uncover tax evasion by Australian taxpayers using the British Virgin Islands, and that in the 2008 financial year about \$2.2 billion came into Australia from the British Virgin Islands.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities allows Australians living with disabilities to lodge unresolved discrimination complaints with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities once all domestic remedies have been exhausted.

During the inquiry the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations suggested that the process by which Australians will be able to make a complaint to the United Nations Committee is not clear. In response to this concern, the Committee has recommended that the Government make advice available to Australians as to when and how a complaint could be lodged with the United Nations Committee, as provided by the Optional Protocol.

The Committee has also supported Australia entering into the *Agreement between the Government of Australia and NATO on the Security of Information*. The Committee considered that the Agreement, which facilitates the exchange of classified information, will strengthen the valuable cooperative relationship between Australia and NATO and will aid current on-going Australia-NATO operations, such as Australia's military deployment in Afghanistan.

Reports 98 and 99 are available on the Committee's website:

www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/reports.htm or by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

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