

## FOREWORD

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Africa, throughout the Cold War period, was the focus of world and super power attention. Considerable amounts of money were channelled into the continent, human rights deficiencies of various regimes overlooked, and poor economic performance excused in the attempt to gain influence and support. The collapse of the Soviet Union has seen some fundamental realignments in relationships, and a refocussing of the attention of the West away from Africa towards Eastern Europe. The impressive economic development in Asia and the emergence of regional groupings such as NAFTA, APEC and the expanded and enhanced European Community have also contributed to Africa's marginalisation in geostrategic terms.

When attention has been focused on Africa, it has more recently been in response to major humanitarian crises, whether caused by environmental factors such as drought, or by civil unrest. More positive developments such as the end of the apartheid era in South Africa, and the emergence of fragile peace agreements in Angola and Mozambique have recently served to redirect the world's attention again to the African continent.

The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade has not conducted an inquiry on Africa since the early 1980s, when it reported on the Horn of Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. More recently, the Committee's inquiries have focussed on issues or regions of more direct interest to Australia such as our relations with Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Thailand. Nevertheless, Committee members themselves have maintained a strong interest in African affairs and the Committee has undertaken a number of inquiries of relevance to Africa such as the 1994 reports on peacekeeping operations, and human rights.

Given the dramatic changes in Africa in recent years, the Committee believed it was appropriate and timely that it look once again at Australia's relations with Africa, and in particular Southern Africa. In determining the Terms of Reference, the Committee considered requests that the inquiry look at all of Sub-Saharan Africa. While acknowledging that such a study would be of great use, the Committee felt it was too broad geographically, and given the limited resources of the Committee, would take far too long to complete. The Committee therefore decided, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs agreed, that it should focus on the member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) - Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Even with a more limited geographic coverage, the Committee found that submissions largely focussed on South Africa, and to a lesser extent Zimbabwe and Mozambique. This may in large part be due to the limited knowledge in Australia of many of the smaller African countries, but it also is an acknowledgment of the dominant role of South Africa in the region. The Committee has attempted, in preparing this report, to focus on the region rather than just South Africa, but it is inevitable that much of the discussion relates to the role of that country in the economic and political life of the region.

This report is not intended to be an encyclopaedic account of all the Committee learned about those countries and their relationship with Australia during the course of the inquiry. Anyone interested in the fine detail of the countries in question should consult the volumes of

submissions and transcripts of evidence gathered by the Committee. Rather, this report has attempted to draw out the major threads of the relationship that Australia has with Southern Africa, and within the general headings of the Terms of Reference, examine Australia's performance to date, and highlight areas for future attention.

## **Conduct of the Inquiry**

On 30 March 1995 the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Gareth Evans QC wrote to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade agreeing with a proposal from the Committee to undertake an inquiry into Australia's relations with Southern Africa. The Committee requested that a newly formed Sub-Committee on Africa, under the chairmanship of Mr Colin Hollis, MP undertake the inquiry on its behalf. The Terms of Reference were subsequently amended on 16 October 1995 to include Mauritius, following its admission to SADC.

The inquiry was advertised in the press in early April 1995, and letters were sent to a range of individuals, academic institutions, business groups and diplomatic representatives advising of the inquiry and requesting input. The Committee also wrote to the governments of the countries involved seeking any comments they might wish to make on the relationship. A list of submissions received is at Appendix 1.

Five public hearings were held - two in Canberra, and one in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. A list of witnesses at the various hearings is at Appendix 2.

In addition the Sub-Committee held private discussions with the High Commissioners for South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mauritius; the former Australian High Commissioner to South Africa; the present Australian High Commissioner to Zimbabwe; and visiting delegations and dignitaries from the SADC countries.

With the dissolution of the Australian Parliament prior to the March 1996 election, the Joint Standing Committee and all of its inquiries lapsed. The Committee was re-established on 30 May 1996. At a meeting on 26 June 1996 the Committee resolved to seek the re-referral of the reference on Australia's relations with Southern Africa from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and appointed a Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr W L Taylor, MP. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon Alexander Downer, MP re-referred this matter to the Joint Standing Committee on 21 August 1996. Letters were then sent to all who had previously made submissions to the inquiry inviting them to update their original comments.

The Committee would like to place on record its thanks to all who made submissions to the inquiry, who attended public hearings and who so generously gave of their time and expertise in assisting the Committee in its deliberations. As Sub-Committee Chairman, I would like to thank in particular Colin Hollis, MP who chaired the Sub-Committee on Africa in the previous Parliament and the other members of the Sub-Committee for their diligence and enthusiasm.

Bill Taylor, MP  
Sub-Committee Chairman

## LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Committee recommends that:

1. **the Australian Parliament and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, explore ways in which appropriate assistance might be provided to the SADC Parliamentary Forum. (Para 2.21)**
2. **Australia respond positively to future requests from SADC for assistance, particularly in institutional strengthening. (Para 2.23)**
3. **Australia review its diplomatic coverage of Southern Africa with a view to:**
  - (a) **establishing other forms of diplomatic representation (eg. sharing facilities with another country, mini-embassies, or creating Honorary Consul positions);**
  - (b) **providing additional staffing to the Australian High Commission in Harare; and**
  - (c) **in the longer term, opening an additional post, to be located in one of the smaller Southern African nations eg. Angola. (Para 2.35)**
4. **Australia offer encouragement and further practical help to the OAU, if requested, to assist in the development of good governance in Africa, particularly Southern Africa, through exploring alternative conflict resolution strategies. (Para 3.9)**
5. **Australia explore with other participants mechanisms to include the hinterland countries reliant on access to the Indian Ocean in future IOR dialogues. (Para 3.36)**
6. **Australia offer increased expert assistance to the fledgling democracies in the Southern African region in such fields as constitutional drafting and electoral law. (Para 4.29)**
7. **the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, AusAID and the Australian Electoral Commission develop an ongoing program of assistance in the area of electoral reform and development. (Para 4.29)**
8. **AusAID, in conjunction with Southern African authorities, consider including provision of some legal education and training, and assistance to establish legal resource centres, as part of the official development assistance program. (Para 4.45)**

9. **Australia encourage an increased regional dialogue through support in the institutional strengthening of organisations such as SADC. (Para 4.53)**
10. **the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade monitor the development of ASAS and offer assistance as appropriate. (Para 4.57)**
11. **Australia explore through the International Forum on the Indian Ocean Rim greater cultural exchanges and trade links. (Para 4.95)**
12. **Australia, as part of its assistance to South Africa, include training for small and medium businesses. (Para 6.33)**
13. **Australia mount a public information campaign in Southern Africa aimed at highlighting the opportunities for business and other contact such as tourism with Australia. (Para 6.67)**
14. (i) **Australia bring forward the timetable for conclusion of a Double Taxation Treaty and an Investment Protection Agreement with South Africa; and**  
  
(ii) **Australia encourage normalisation of currency and exchange agreements and harmonisation of regulatory and other requirements within SADC countries. (Para 6.80)**
15. **Austrade review its current staffing allocation to Southern Africa with a view to appointing an A-based officer to have responsibility for those countries covered by the Australian post in Zimbabwe. (Para 6.85)**
16. **Austrade conduct a study on the publicising and implementation of EMDG with special reference to Australian companies trading with Southern Africa. (Para 6.93)**
17. **Austrade produce a brochure for Australian companies interested in trading with Southern Africa, setting out basic information about the market, and assistance available to potential exporters. (Para 6.93)**
18. **Austrade participate in the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair in 1997 and 1998, and review the degree of business interest after that period. (Para 6.98)**
19. **Australia encourage an increase in the number of study exchanges between SADC and Australian educational institutions. (Para 7.49)**
20. **Australia establish a formal exchange program between employees of the public and corporate sectors of SADC countries and Australia, with an emphasis on the industry specialist areas of infrastructure, education and agriculture. (Para 7.49)**
21. **Australia fund a small investigative team representing nationwide Technical and Further Education and training institutions, to undertake a feasibility study of SADC countries with the view to setting**

- up vocational education and training programs supported by Australia. (Para 7.49)
22. **Australia facilitate a thorough assessment and analysis of potential business and management training programs and services for prospective or present indigenous national business owners and managers. (Para 7.56)**
  23. **the Australian Tourist Commission review its location, staffing and promotional activities in Southern Africa with a view to raising its visibility. (Para 7.64)**
  24. **the Department of Industry, Science and Tourism and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade explore with the South African and Zimbabwe governments a Memorandum of Understanding on tourism cooperation. (Para 7.67)**
  25. **Austrade research the potential niche markets for Australia in SADC countries. (Para 7.74)**
  26. **Australia reaffirm its commitment to the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for official development purposes. (Para 8.12)**
  27. **AusAID in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade examine the new aid policy for Africa, announced in August 1995, with a view to determining its effectiveness and scope. (Para 8.31)**
  28. **Australia in international fora, explore ways in which the indebtedness of Southern African countries could be alleviated. (Para 8.38)**
  29. **health issues continue to be addressed by AusAID and relevant NGOs with an emphasis on the provision of sanitation, safe water supply and basic health services. (Para 9.17)**
  30. **Australia continue to fund HIV/AIDS education programs aimed, in particular, at adolescents and young adults in urban areas where infection rates are higher than those in rural communities. (Para 9.19)**
  31. **Australia ensure funding is allocated through AusAID and NGOs for the establishment and continuation of hospices and orphanages for infants and children such as those suffering from HIV/AIDS and those orphaned as a result of the disease. (Para 9.21)**
  32. **any Australian Government funding for NGO family planning programs in SADC countries should ensure that these are culturally sensitive, fully in conformity with our legal principles of informed consent, free from any coercive policies or practices which prevent couples exercising true freedom of choice in determining family size, have regard to the human rights records of the countries concerned, and not involve abortion or abortion drugs. (Para 9.43)**

33. **AusAID continue to include a focus on education and training in its programs, with an increased emphasis in the areas of basic education and vocational and technical education. (Para 9.60)**
34. **Australian universities and TAFEs collectively promote the opportunities for education (both in-country and in Australia) to Southern African countries. (Para 9.60)**
35. **AusAID provide funding to SADC for the establishment of a 'micro-enterprise program' for the women of Southern Africa, enabling them to borrow capital to establish livelihood projects. (Para 9.78)**
36. **the issue of women's health continue to be addressed by AusAID and relevant NGOs, with an emphasis on the provision of sanitation and water, maternal and infant health services, family planning services, and health education particularly relevant to HIV/AIDS. (Para 9.78)**
37. **funding and aid support continue to be provided through AusAID and NGOs to provide access to education for all children, regardless of gender. (Para 9.78)**
38. **Australia continue to work for a total ban on landmines. (Para 9.106)**
39. **Australia continue to provide assistance through government and NGO agencies to SADC countries for demining activities. Such assistance should encompass:
  - (a) **medical and rehabilitation assistance to landmine victims, including the supply of prostheses to victims;**
  - (b) **community education on the dangers of landmines; and**
  - (c) **training for local people in demining methods. (Para 9.109)****
40. **Australia establish a mechanism to assist associations such as the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific, but more broadly NGOs, develop an interchange program with the countries of Southern Africa. (Para 10.14)**
41. **the Commonwealth Government be prepared to consider any feasibility study submitted by the Western Australian Government and the University of Western Australia and Curtin University on establishing a Centre for African Studies in Western Australia. (Para 10.26)**
42. **Australia support cultural exchanges with Southern Africa and set up a liaison with the Australia Southern Africa Business Council (Inc) through which requests for assistance can be channelled. (Para 10.31)**