



Submission No 12

Inquiry into Australia's Overseas Representation

Name: Jo Evans
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Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Dr Carter,

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) provides the following response to the 2011 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into *Australia's overseas representation*.

DAFF engages an overseas network in 13 countries across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and United States of America. The officers deployed undertake departmental objectives in supporting whole of government trade strategies and activities multilaterally, regionally and bilaterally. Our officers conduct a range of functions by contributing evidence based knowledge and expertise.

The department sees value in utilising eDiplomacy and information technology as a tool in maintaining communications with stakeholders, however does not see benefit in replacing the existing overseas network with virtual in-country representation.

The geographic location, spread and staffing of DAFF's overseas posts

DAFF has international representation in 13 countries, with a focus on Australia's key agriculture export destinations and emerging markets including: Japan; China; the United States; Indonesia; India; European Union; Middle East; and Republic of Korea. In total DAFF has 12 officers (8 Executive Level 2 Counsellors and 4 Senior Executive Service Band 1 Minister-Counsellors) posted overseas, supported by 21 Locally Engaged Staff (LES) positions.

Post	A-Based Staffing	Locally Engaged Staff
South and South East Asia		
Australian Embassy, Bangkok	1 Counsellor (also accredited to the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Laos and Cambodia)	1 Locally Engaged Staff
Australian Embassy, Jakarta	1 Counsellor	4.5 Locally Engaged Staff
Australia High Commission, New Delhi	1 Counsellor	1 Locally Engaged Staff
North Asia		
Australian Embassy, Beijing	2 Counsellors	2 Locally Engaged Staff
Australian Embassy, Seoul	1 Counsellor (also accredited to Taiwan)	1 Locally Engaged Staff

Australian Commerce and Industry Office, Taipei		Locally Engaged Staff only
Australian Embassy, Tokyo	1 Minister-Counsellor 1 Counsellor	3 Locally Engaged Staff
Europe		
Australian Embassy, Brussels	1 Minister-Counsellor	2 Locally Engaged Staff
Australian Embassy, Moscow		Locally Engaged Staff only

Middle East		
Australian Consulate-General, Dubai	1 Consul	1 Locally Engaged Staff
United States of America		
Australian Embassy, Washington	1 Minister-Counsellor	1.5 Locally Engaged Staff
Multi-lateral Posts		
Australian Embassy, Rome	1 Minister-Counsellor (also accredited to France)	1 Locally Engaged Staff
Australian Delegation to OECD, Paris		Locally Engaged Staff only

In Jakarta DAFF has an additional 3 Executive Level 2 officers and 5 Locally Engaged Staff positions in support of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) funded Emerging Infectious Disease Program delivered by DAFF.

We regularly review the locations and staffing of our overseas network to ensure we maximise the public value of available resources and in response to Government priorities and budgetary constraints. The current geographical coverage of the overseas network has assisted portfolio outcomes in agricultural and trade policy, biosecurity and market access in Australia's countries of agricultural engagement.

The department's overseas network originally covered areas of strong commercial and agricultural policy interest in developed countries, however it has expanded to include several developing economies and key regional trading partners. The extent and reach of the overseas network is constrained by departmental resourcing. With changes in resources DAFF would consider increasing representation in the overseas network.

The current network has potential to be used in additional markets where Counsellors are accredited to more than their country of posting. Additional visits to other countries, however, diverts the officers from their core activities and it is often more difficult to establish long term contact networks.

A challenge for DAFF is attracting and retaining LES who have subject matter expertise specifically in locations where DAFF representation is through locally engaged staff only.

The efforts of the overseas network are complemented by travel from Canberra. Our overseas officers have immediate and established relationships as well as technical and market expertise that work in harmony with visiting DAFF delegations.

Where DAFF is not represented, the Department relies on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and other government departments to represent Australian agricultural interests. For

example, DFAT staff accredited to countries in Africa respond on our behalf to the market access issues in those countries. DFAT officers in Geneva manage portfolio negotiations, particularly in relation to the World Trade Organisation, in the whole of government context. DFAT and the Australian Trade Commission (AUSTRADE) assist with promulgating information and advice to our stakeholders.

The activities that DAFF's overseas posts must undertake

DAFF supports whole of government trade strategies and activities multilaterally, regionally and bilaterally by contributing evidence based knowledge and expertise. Our overseas staff are key contact points between the department and Australia's major agricultural trading partners and international organisations. Our overseas network provides coverage across our key international markets and multilateral organisations.

DAFF posts achieve the following outcomes:

- gaining, maintaining and improving agricultural market access opportunities
- building international relationships with trading partner and members of international fora
- reducing and/or removing distortions to international trade
- resolving technical market access issues
- supporting scientific biosecurity and quarantine policies
- mitigating external risks to our plant and animal health status
- ensuring sustainable resource management and access to resources
- influencing global issues that impact on Australia's agricultural interests
- gaining access to key agricultural decision-makers
- assisting in the development of international standards for trade in portfolio products
- providing market information and policy advice
- facilitating technical assistance through capacity building and agricultural cooperation

To achieve government objectives, DAFF works cooperatively with DFAT, AUSTRADE, AusAID and other departments represented at Posts. While DFAT is the lead agency in respect to Australia's trade policy, DAFF provides invaluable expertise and industry knowledge and analysis of local policy and addresses technical market access and biosecurity issues. DAFF also works collaboratively with the Department of Customs and Border Protection, the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, and the Department of Defence To provide a whole-of-government approach.

DAFF uses established contact networks and embassy facilities and infrastructure. The overseas agricultural network is integral to pursuing Australia's market access priorities and international policy interests. The specialist agricultural and technical knowledge of DAFF's posted officers enables Australia to engage on agricultural priorities with key trading partners and international organisations in ways that complement DFAT's overseas liaison efforts.

All DAFF posts overseas are managed and administered by DFAT or AUSTRADE (Dubai only). These departments provide the infrastructure and support required for officers to conduct DAFF business internationally. We rely on DFAT information and communication technology systems and administrative support. Our locally engaged staff are employed and administered under DFAT contracts and arrangements.

The effect of eDiplomacy and information and communication technology on the activities of diplomatic posts

Advances in eDiplomacy and ICT will improve the efficiency and responsiveness of our overseas network and will increase our reach internationally. The concept is only in its early inception and although we accept it has potential for DAFF, we do not consider eDiplomacy as a substitute for representatives overseas rather we see it as a tool for our officers posted overseas.

DAFF effectively uses the internet as a tool for public diplomacy through the provision of information on our Departmental website. On the DAFF website, we publish profiles of our overseas staff and their contact details. We also provide updates on Free Trade Agreement negotiations and market access issues and successes. We have pages dedicated to quarantine where we provide e-brochures in support of biosecurity and protecting Australia's agriculture. DAFF has been expanding the use of electronic certification systems, which improve the security of health certificates that accompany some trade agricultural commodities. Use of these systems also aids in faster resolution of documentation problems that arise at the border for our exports and has assisted with some reductions of resources faced due to budgetary constraints in Washington.

Face-to-face interaction and communication with our stakeholders is integral to building rapport and positive relationships. For our overseas posts our stakeholders include host-country government agencies, host country industry groups, third-country counterparts and Australian mission counterparts. The face-to-face communication is especially important for establishing new relationships in emerging markets. The importance of communicating in person is relevant in countries where there may be cultural sensitivities and language barriers. In some countries it can be seen as insensitive to engage someone through non visual communications, where body language is integral to building rapport. In many developing countries the use of internet communications is far more limited and we are unable to rely on information and communications technology. Equally, even in established markets where English is spoken, our presence through Posts is crucial to being able to critique policy endeavours and offer alternative approaches based on Australia's policy experience.

Time zones will have a significant impact on the department's ability to fully use e-diplomacy, especially with our mature markets in the US and Europe.

DAFF will be cautious in implementing e-diplomacy and will follow DFAT's lead. We would need to consider access restrictions and information security and we are currently limited by DFAT policies, procedures and infrastructure.

If you require additional information on this response please contact Lucia Sharrad on 6272 3328 or lucia.sharrad@daff.gov.au in the first instance.

Yours



Jo Evans
First Assistant Secretary Trade and Market Access Division

30 NOVEMBER 2011