



JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE on TREATIES
Treaties tabled on 9 and 10 February, and 1 March 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

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Chair: Mr Kelvin Thomson MP
Deputy Chair: Senator Julian McGauran

Prisoner transfer treaty with China approved

Australian nationals imprisoned in China will be able to apply to serve out their sentences in Australia, under a prisoner exchange treaty approved by the Treaties Committee today.

The proposed treaty will apply to both Australian nationals imprisoned in China and Chinese nationals imprisoned in Australia.

“Prisoners who avail themselves of this opportunity will benefit from being close to friends and family, and the families of prisoners will be spared the financial burden of going to China,” committee chair Kelvin Thomson MP said. “The treaty is also likely to improve the chances of rehabilitation for prisoners who have been sentenced in China.”

Under the treaty, neither party is compelled to transfer prisoners. The transfer has to be conducted at the prisoner’s request, and approved by the Australian and Chinese governments and the State or Territory Government to which the prisoner wishes to be transferred.

The prisoner will be required to serve the term of the sentence applied to them in China.

The prisoner exchange treaty is one of five treaties reviewed in the Committee’s *Report 117*, which was tabled in Parliament today. The report also covers:

- the *Agreement between Australia and the Slovak Republic on Social Security*
- the *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of South Africa concerning the Co-Production of Films*
- the *Third Protocol Amending the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia*; and
- *Amendments to the Singapore–Australia Free Trade Agreement*

The Committee recommended all five treaties be ratified, but expressed some concern at the quality of advice provided to the committee by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in relation to the Amendments to the Singapore–Australia Free Trade Agreement.

“The quality of the information provided by the department left a lot to be desired, and the original text of the treaty tabled in Parliament wasn’t complete,” Mr Thomson said.

Report 117 is 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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