



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

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**Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Foreign Affairs and Aid Sub-Committee**

*Chair: The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP
Deputy Chair: Senator the Hon Ursula
Stephens*

The business of aid in the Indo-Pacific

Opportunities to expand the role of the private sector in promoting economic growth and reducing poverty in the Indo-Pacific region will be examined in a new inquiry.

The Foreign Affairs and Aid sub-committee of Federal Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade will investigate the issues surrounding aid and trade, an area receiving more attention globally.

Australia has been an active participant in this conversation, and over recent years Australian governments have undertaken reviews and released strategies that highlight the importance of a fully engaged private sector. With the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade now also being responsible for Australia's overseas aid program, it is timely to assess the relationship between the private and government sectors. It may be time to reinvigorate Australia's approach to aid and economic development across the region.

Sub-committee chair Dr Sharman Stone said some of the poorest and least economically developed countries in the world are in the Indo-Pacific region, with women and children disproportionately affected. "Lifting people out of poverty and giving them hope of a self-sufficient and sustainable future may be better achieved by using new combinations of traditional aid and private sector engagement," she said.

"Successful economic development resulting in more prosperous private sectors across the region not only helps meet our social responsibility obligations, but also provides expanding markets for Australian businesses – a win-win situation."

The inquiry's terms of reference include examining:

- The current role of the private sector in accelerating the pace of economic growth and in reducing poverty in poor countries in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Current Australian Government support for private sector development through bilateral and multilateral investments.
- Legislative, institutional, social and policy constraints that may reduce the ability of private sector agencies to engage in development.
- Additional partnerships, activities or financial instruments the Australian government could use to enhance the role of the private sector in development in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The role of public-private partnerships in leveraging private sector investment in developing countries.
- Risks related to current and possible future approaches to enhancing the role of the private sector in development, and their management.
- The role Australian and international businesses could play to support development and inclusive growth in partner countries.

The sub-committee will receive written submissions until 8 May 2014, after which it will commence public hearings. Contributions are welcome from all those with an interest in the inquiry. In particular, we encourage submissions from the private sector. Further details about the inquiry, including how to contribute, can be obtained from the committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/jfadt or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 2313 or emailing jscfadt@aph.gov.au.

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