
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Australia's relationship with the Republic of Korea; and developments on the Korean peninsula

호주-한국 관계와 한반도 정세

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee

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Contents

Foreword	ix
Membership of the Committee	xiii
Membership of the Sub-Committee	xv
Terms of reference	xvii
List of abbreviations	xix
List of recommendations	xxiii
1 Australia’s engagement with the Korean peninsula.....	1
Introduction	1
The current importance of the Australia—RoK Relationship.....	2
A brief history of Australia’s relations with Korea	3
1884-1950	3
The Korean War and beyond	3
Korean migration to Australia	4
Conduct of the inquiry.....	5
Structure of the report.....	5
2 Inter-governmental relations.....	7
Introduction	7
Government and Parliamentary visits.....	7
Commonwealth Government visits to the Republic of Korea	8
Republic of Korea Government visits to Australia	8
Government cooperation.....	9
Parliamentary delegations.....	11
Committee comment	12

Security relations	12
The Republic of Korea security posture	12
Australia-Republic of Korea shared security interests	12
US regional engagement	13
Senior level defence visits	13
Peacekeeping	14
Consequence management	15
Defence industry cooperation	15
Exercise observation and participation	16
Defence educational exchange	16
Committee comment	17
The Australia-Korea Foundation	18
Membership	18
Funding and activities	19
2001 review of Australia-Korea Foundation activities	21
Committee comment	22
3 The economic relationship	25
Introduction	25
Established and emerging areas of trade	26
Business representation	27
Austrade Seoul	27
Committee comment	29
Australia-Korea Business Council	29
Overseas Korean Traders Association	30
Committee comment	31
Australian Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers' Association	31
Meat & Livestock Australia Limited	33
Business engagement—energy, resources and primary produce	34
Energy and resources	34
Committee comment	38
Primary produce	38
Committee comment	40
Business engagement—goods and services	40

Goods	41
Services	42
Committee comment	44
Business engagement—direct investment	45
Australian direct investment in the Republic of Korea	45
Republic of Korea business direct investment in Australia	46
Committee comment	46
4 Challenges facing the economic relationship.....	49
Anti-dumping.....	49
Republic of Korea concerns	50
Committee comment	56
Trade barriers	57
Australian concerns.....	57
Republic of Korea concerns	62
Committee Comment	63
Challenges in the tourism sector.....	64
Arrival procedures in Australia	64
Unethical practices by inbound tourism operators.....	65
Committee Comment	66
Challenges in the LNG trade	66
The cultural divide	67
Challenges in the Republic of Korea	68
Challenges in Australia	69
Response from the Republic of Korea	70
Committee comment	70
Considering a free trade agreement.....	71
Introduction	71
The Australian perspective.....	71
Points raised	72
The Republic of Korea perspective	74
Points raised	74
Committee comment.....	75

5	Cultural relations	77
	Introduction	77
	Cultural understanding in the business relationship	78
	Local representation in the Republic of Korea.....	78
	Committee comment.....	79
	Building cultural relations through sport and the arts	80
	Sport.....	80
	Committee comment.....	82
	The arts.....	82
	Committee comment.....	86
	Republic of Korea Government cultural activities in Australia.....	87
	Committee comment.....	88
6	Education and research	89
	Introduction	89
	Providing educational services for Republic of Korea nationals	90
	The education market.....	90
	Promoting Australia's educational services.....	91
	Impediments to expanding the education market.....	93
	Committee comment.....	96
	Interaction at secondary school level	98
	The study of the Korean language in Australia.....	98
	Student exchanges and visits.....	103
	Committee comment.....	104
	Interaction at tertiary and post-tertiary level	107
	Student exchanges.....	107
	A Korean studies research centre.....	108
	Committee comment.....	109
	Research collaboration.....	109
7	Developments on the Korean peninsula	117
	Introduction	117
	The Democratic People's Republic of Korea in world affairs	118
	Refugee issues.....	119

Committee comment	121
Inter-Korean links.....	121
The Sunshine Policy and the Policy of Peace and Prosperity	121
Committee comment	123
Humanitarian aid	123
AusAid.....	124
The Australian Red Cross	124
Caritas Australia.....	126
Committee comment	127
Australia's relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.....	127
Commonwealth Government engagement.....	127
Scientific collaboration	129
Committee comment	130
Appendix A: List of Submissions	131
Submissions.....	131
Appendix B: List of Exhibits	135
Exhibits.....	135
Appendix C: Witnesses appearing at public hearings	137
Canberra, Wednesday 31 August 2005	137
Canberra, Thursday 1 September 2005.....	140
Sydney, Tuesday 20 September 2005	142
Melbourne, Wednesday 21 September 2005.....	144
Canberra, Monday 7 November 2005	145



Foreword

For over half a century Australia and the Republic of Korea (RoK) have enjoyed an important and productive relationship. The RoK is the tenth largest economy in the world and the third largest in Asia. In 2005, the RoK was Australia's third largest export market and fourth largest trading partner. Our trading relationship is complementary – Australia exports natural resources to the RoK and imports manufactured goods from the RoK.

This report reviews that trading relationship, but goes further to include issues such as cross-cultural understanding, and relations between Australian and Korean institutions, both government and non-government.

The report also includes a commentary on issues concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea because of their potential impact on regional trade and security.

The relationship between Australia and the RoK is strong and exists on many levels. While there appear to be no major impediments to the relationship, opportunities exist at the margins for enhancement.

Government to government interactions play an important role in setting the agenda in any bilateral relationship. Reciprocal visits by Australian and RoK Government Ministers are frequent and inter-government cooperation and consultation exists at many levels.

Australia and the RoK share a number of security interests in the Asia-Pacific region and the belief that cooperation in the areas of peacekeeping, consequence management, and defence industry cooperation are key focal points. The report recommends continued defence cooperation and further exploration of defence cooperation opportunities.

Trade is the mainstay in the Australia–RoK relationship. The report reviews trade between the two countries and the challenges facing the economic relationship.

Organisations such as AusTrade, and the Australia-Korea Business Council provide valuable assistance to Australian exporters. There is, however, the potential to expand the trade undertaken by the small business sector. To this end, greater support should be provided, by way of organisations such as the Overseas Korean Traders Association.

Free trade agreements are another way to increase trade, but any free trade agreement should not be at the expense of Australian and Korean cultural industries. As well, agriculture issues should be resolved early in any negotiations.

Educational services is an important sector in Australia's trade relationship with the RoK. The RoK is the second most important source country for foreign students studying in Australia. This market can be developed further through improving the educational experience of visiting students, reviewing visa requirements, and mutually recognising educational qualifications.


Cultural understanding enhances Australia's relationship with the RoK. There is potential to strengthen cultural understanding. For example, Australian businesses can gain an understanding of Korean culture by engaging local representatives in Korea. There are also opportunities to build country-to-country cultural understanding through sporting links and cultural exchanges.

The Australia-Korea Foundation (AKF) is a key body promoting the Australia-RoK relationship. The AKF promotes exchanges and institutional links in many areas and at all levels. The Committee recognises the valuable work of the AKF and has reviewed the expertise contributed by board members. This expertise covers the areas of AKF focus and the majority of board members have direct experience working in the RoK. Nevertheless, the report recommends that board membership should include more members with an intimate knowledge of Korean society and culture.

Teaching the Korean language and culture in Australian schools also promotes cultural understanding. Unfortunately, there has been a decline in Australian student interest in learning Korean. There are several reasons for this decline and the report presents a strategy to address this problem.

There is a high level of collaboration between Australia and the RoK in science and technology research. The risk, however, is that this activity becomes piecemeal and uncoordinated. The Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training needs to take the lead in providing a strategic direction through the development of an action agenda.

The RoK occupies an important place in North Asia. Situated between Japan and China, the RoK has established itself as an economic force in the region and globally. It is important that Australia continues to maintain and grow its relations with the RoK. I believe that this report, through its analysis and recommendations, will enhance what is already a strong relationship between the two countries.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Jull', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Hon. David Jull MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee



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Sub-Committee Secretariat

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Terms of reference

The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade shall inquire into and report on Australia's relationship with the Republic of Korea; and developments on the Korean peninsula.

The Committee shall review political, strategic, economic (including trade and investment), social and cultural issues; and consider both the current situation and opportunities for the future.



List of abbreviations

AAS	Australian Academy of Science
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACIS	Automotive Competitiveness and Investment Scheme
ACS	Australian Customs Service
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AEEMA	Australian Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers' Association
AEI	Australian Education International
AFC	Australian Film Commission
AKBC	Australia-Korea Business Council
AKF	Australia-Korea Foundation
AKTE	Australia-Korea Teacher Exchange
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARC	Australian Red Cross
ASC	Australian Sports Commission
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ATSE	Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering
AusAid	Australian Agency for International Development

AWBC	Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation
Caritas	Catholic Agency for Overseas Aid and Development
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Research Organisation
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DCITA	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
DITR	Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
ELTF	Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships
ESOS	Education Services for Overseas Students
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
HSC	Higher School Certificate
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICT	information and communication technology
KARC	Korea-Australasia Research Centre
KEC	Korean Education Centre
KIGAM	Korean Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources
KOGAS	Korean Gas Corporation

KOSEF	Korean Science and Engineering Foundation
LNG	liquefied natural gas
MEAA	Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
MLA	Meat & Livestock Australia
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
NALSAS	National Asian Languages Studies in Australian Schools
NGOs	non-government organisations
NLA	The National Library of Australia
NWSLNG	North West Shelf LNG Pty Ltd
NWSV	North West Shelf Venture
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OKTA	Overseas Korean Traders Association
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific
RoK	Republic of Korea
RSPAS	Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
RTCA	Rio Tinto Coal Australia
SME	small and medium enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNCOK	United Nations Commission on Korea
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTO	World Trade Organisation



List of recommendations

2 Inter-governmental relations

Recommendation 1

In recognition of the growing importance of the Australia-RoK defence relationship, the Committee suggests that Defence continues to explore opportunities to enhance participation in bilateral defence exercises.

Recommendation 2

At the first opportunity, the Australia-Korea Foundation ensure its board membership includes more members with an intimate knowledge of Korean society and culture.

3 The economic relationship

Recommendation 3

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provide all possible assistance, via organisations such as the Overseas Korean Traders Association, to small businesses exporting or wishing to export to the Republic of Korea.

4 Challenges facing the economic relationship

Recommendation 4

In the event of the Commonwealth Government commencing free trade agreement negotiations with the Republic of Korea, Australian cultural industries (as well as Korean cultural industries) be protected, and issues relating to agriculture be determined at an early stage of negotiations.

6 Education and research

Recommendation 5

Australian Education International create an Internet-based forum for Korean students returning from Australia. Comments on this forum should be regularly reviewed and followed up if necessary with Australian educators.

Recommendation 6

The Department of Education, Science and Training develop a memorandum of understanding with its Republic of Korea counterpart with a view to the mutual recognition of educational qualifications.

Recommendation 7

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs review the risk presented by students from the Republic of Korea who are accompanied by a guardian when they study in Australia. The result should be incorporated into the overall risk assessment for such students.

Recommendation 8

The Department of Education, Science and Training promote school exchange visits between Australia and the RoK through direct funding, or by facilitating sponsorship from non-Commonwealth Government bodies.

Recommendation 9

The Department of Education, Science and Training coordinate a review of the breadth and depth of science and technology research collaboration between Australia and the Republic of Korea with the purpose of providing strategic leadership through the development of an action agenda.

