



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

File Number: 15/34129

17 February 2016

Mr David Sullivan
Secretary
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Sullivan,

I wish to correct my answer to Senator McEwen's question regarding the Milan Expo 2015 decision timeline at the Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Legislation Committee Additional Estimates Hearing on 11 February. The discussion is referenced on page 95 of the proof Hansard.

Minister Bishop and Minister Robb wrote to the Prime Minister on 15 May 2014 (not 18 June 2014) and a decision was taken by the Prime Minister on 14 June 2014 (not 13 July 2014).

As per my testimony, the Minister for Foreign Affairs wrote to the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Affairs to advise Australia would not participate on 26 June 2014.

I would appreciate if you could pass on to the Committee my sincere apology for providing an inaccurate response.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Tranter
First Assistant Secretary
Public Diplomacy and Communications Division

Australia not participating in the 2015 world fair. The answer was that it was a decision of the Australian government. Did the department advise the government that it should participate in the expo? Was any advice given to government by the department about participation in the expo?

Senator Colbeck: I think the question as to whether there was advice given is okay but not what was in the advice.

Senator McEWEN: Who in the Australian government made the decision in the case of Expo Milano 2015?

Mr Tranter: The decision was made by the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade and Investment.

Senator McEWEN: The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade and Investment?

Mr Tranter: Correct.

Senator McEWEN: A joint decision. A joint advice to the Prime Minister who made the ultimate decision—is that paraphrasing what you said?

Mr Tranter: That is correct.

Senator McEWEN: What date was that decision taken by the Prime Minister?

Mr Tranter: Minister Bishop and Minister Robb wrote to the Prime Minister on 18 June and a decision was taken by the Prime Minister on 13 July 2014.

Senator McEWEN: When was that notified to the department?

Mr Tranter: I cannot recall the date that the correspondence came back but it was shortly after it was signed.

Senator McEWEN: And that was a decision from the Prime Minister's office?

Mr Tranter: It was by the Prime Minister. The foreign minister then wrote to the president of the Bureau of International Expositions on 5 August. Excuse me just one second; I will just consult my notes. Sorry, the Minister for Foreign Affairs advised the minister for foreign affairs and European affairs of the Republic of Italy of Australia's decision to not participate on 26 June 2014.

Senator McEWEN: Was any reason given in that correspondence?

Mr Tranter: The correspondence cited that the government's decision to not participate was taken in the context of the tight fiscal environment in Australia at the time of the correspondence in June 2014.

Senator McEWEN: And this is by invitation, is it? Participation in an expo like that is by invitation of the host country?

Mr Tranter: That is correct.

Senator McEWEN: Has Australia been invited to and has it committed to participating in Expo 2017 in Kazakhstan?

Mr Tranter: I understand that an invitation has been provided to the government. I am not aware of a response to that invitation. I will have to take that on notice.

Senator McEWEN: All right. If you could also take on notice whether or not Australia has been invited to and/or has committed to participating in Expo 2020 Dubai.

Mr Tranter: An invitation has been provided and no response has been provided to that invitation.

CHAIR: Thank you, Senator McEwen. To the secretary, can I thank you and your officers. We will see you again for the budget estimates, no doubt.

Mr Varghese: I will be back for the trade portfolio.

Proceedings suspended from 18:30 to 19:29

CHAIR: We will now move to the Trade portfolio, starting with the department. I welcome again Minister the Hon. Richard Colbeck. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Senator Colbeck: No.

CHAIR: Secretary?

Mr Varghese: No, thanks.

Senator WONG: Just a housekeeping issue first: I have some questions on promotion, and questions on notice were answered, I think, both by DFAT and by Austrade. I would like to cover those together—not now; at the conclusion.

Mr Varghese: Is this on FTA advocacy?