

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

Question No. SBE15/053

Senator Leyonhjelm asked the following question at the hearing on 20 October 2015:

1. What are the benefits and costs, if any, to Australia from other countries being members of Interpol?
2. What is required for a country to become a member of Interpol?
3. Can a current member assist another country to become a member?
 - a. If so, in what way?
4. Is the Government aware of any interest from Taiwan in becoming a member of Interpol?
5. What would be the benefits and costs, if any, to Australia from Taiwan becoming a member of Interpol?
6. Has the Government assisted Taiwan to become a member of Interpol?
 - a. If so, in what way?
 - b. If not, will the Government assist Taiwan to become a member of Interpol? If not, why not?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

1. A country's membership of INTERPOL supports enhanced and more secure international law enforcement cooperation directly to an official Government recognised law enforcement contact point. This provides assurances that an enquiry is from a legitimate originator, allows for swift responses and provides access to larger law enforcement datasets contributed to and available for all member countries.

INTERPOL provides capacity building and training, encourages international joint investigations, facilitates secure information sharing and promotes INTERPOL initiatives to strengthen border security.

Each country must also provide a mandatory annual financial contribution which is determined by a formula based in part on the country's GDP and UN contributions and results in a percentage of the budget. Smaller countries have a minimum payment required of approximately AUD25,000, with Australia's contribution currently approximately AUD1.6 million paid by the AFP on behalf of all Australian law enforcement and relevant regulatory and government agencies.

In addition, a country may provide financial support, equipment or expertise to other member countries to support specific initiatives, operations or capacity building.

2. To become a member of INTERPOL, a country must provide a submission from the head of the applicant country (or relevant senior Minister) to INTERPOL seeking to join. The submission must demonstrate a willingness to assume the obligations outlined under INTERPOL's Constitution. Application also includes providing details supporting sufficient data protection legislation, processes and institutions which support the effective prevention and suppression of offences committed against the criminal law. The country must also nominate a suitable unit to facilitate all INTERPOL enquiries to/from that country as the National Central Bureau (NCB). The AFP currently undertakes the role of the Australian NCB and now has 16 FTE to facilitate all INTERPOL and Europol enquiries to and from

Australia. The AFP pays the INTERPOL annual financial contribution on behalf of Australia.

Following a positive assessment by INTERPOL's Legal and Internal Governance, the request is put to the annual INTERPOL General Assembly, where existing member country representatives must vote. A two thirds majority is required to secure membership.

3. A member country can assist another in seeking membership to INTERPOL, however this should be limited to advice and support in their submission and then potentially lobbying for support and voting at the INTERPOL General Assembly.
4. No.
5. See response to question one.
6. No.
 - a. Not applicable.
 - b. This question is outside the AFP's remit to answer.