



**The Parliament of the
Commonwealth of Australia**

**Australian Parliamentary Delegation
to Greece and Turkey**

26 September - 4 October 2017

Members of the Delegation:

Mr Rob Mitchell MP (Delegation Leader)
Member for McEwen, Australian Labor Party

Mr Steve Georganas MP
Member for Hindmarsh, Australian Labor Party

Senator Barry O'Sullivan
Senator for Queensland, The Nationals

Delegation Secretary:

Ms Ann Palmer, Senate Committee Office

Introduction

This report outlines the key themes of the Australian parliamentary delegation's visit to Greece and Turkey between 26 September and 4 October 2017.

Acknowledgments

The delegation's visit was supported by the Australian Parliament's International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). During meetings and site visits, the delegation was accompanied by officers of DFAT stationed in Greece and Turkey. The delegation thanks all officers for their assistance, in particular:

In Greece

- Ms Sophia McIntyre;
- Mr Andrea Biggi; and
- Ms Leonie Kowalenko.

In Turkey

- His Excellency Mr Marc Innes-Brown;
- Mr Dylan Walsh;
- Mr Andrew Cooper;
- Dr Oytun Deliktaş; and
- Mr Barış Kaya.

The delegation extends its thanks to all the staff at the Australian embassies in Athens and Ankara and the consulates in Istanbul and Çanakkale for their work in supporting and assisting the delegation's visit.

Greece

Background

The first significant Greek migration to Australia began in the 1850s as part of the gold rush. There was a substantial increase in immigration between the First and Second World Wars. After World War II, large numbers of Greeks migrated to Australia, encouraged by the Greek Government. Numbers further increased after 1952 with the Australian Government providing assisted passage to tens of thousands of Greeks. Migration increased further in the 1960s and the 1971 Census recorded 160 000 Greece-born people in Australia.¹

The 2016 Australian Census recorded 93 745 Greece-born people in Australia and 1.8 percent of the population indicated they had Greek ancestry.

Aside from migration, Greece and Australia have strong ties as a result of the involvement of Australian troops in the defence of Greece during World War II. In 1941, Australian soldiers, alongside British and New Zealand troops, supported Greek forces against German and Italian forces.

Economic conditions in Greece

The Greek economy entered a prolonged recession following the global financial crisis in 2009. DFAT provided the following overview of the economic situation in Greece:

According to the International Monetary Fund, Greek general government net debt was 179 per cent of GDP by the end of 2015. Unemployment was 23 per cent in late 2016.

To stabilise the economy and address unsustainably high levels of public debt, Greece is undertaking a wide-ranging program of economic reforms and fiscal consolidation supported by the European Commission, the European Central Bank, the European Stability Mechanism and the International Monetary Fund.²

Bilateral trade relationship

In terms of the trading relationship between Australia and Greece:

In 2015–16, Greece was Australia's 66th largest merchandise trading partner. Two-way merchandise trade was approximately \$216 million. Australian exports to Greece totalled \$15 million and consisted mainly of fruits and nuts, agricultural machinery, specialized machinery and parts, and ships and boats. Goods imported from Greece totalled \$201 million, including prepared and preserved vegetables, cheese and curd, medicaments (including veterinary) and aluminium. Two-way services trade between

1 See: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Community Information Summary: Greece-Born*, February 2014, available at: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-greece-born-community>.

2 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Country brief on Greece*.

Greece and Australia is heavily weighted in Greece's favour. The export of Australian services to Greece was worth around \$79 million in 2015-16, while services imports from Greece totalled \$917 million. Our services trade consists mainly education-related travel and transport services.³

In May 2014, Australia and Greece signed a Work and Holiday Visa Arrangement. In 2015 Australia, the European Council and the European Commission jointly announced the intention to commence a process towards an Australian-European Union Free Trade Agreement.

The delegation's visit in Greece was divided between Athens and the island of Crete, with meetings and site visits focused on three themes:

- trade and economic opportunities;
- the historic bilateral relationship between Australia and Greece; and
- border management.

Trade and economic opportunities

Australian-European Union Free Trade Agreement

On 15 November 2015, the Australian Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission, jointly announced a process to start an Australian-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website summarises the current trading relationship between Australia and the European Union (EU):

As a bloc, the EU is Australia's largest source of foreign investment and second largest trading partner. In 2015-16, the EU's foreign direct investment in Australia was valued at \$157.6 billion and Australian foreign direct investment in the EU was valued at \$111.8 billion. Total two-way merchandise and services trade between Australia and the EU was worth \$95.6 billion.

The EU is Australia's largest services export market, valued at \$10.4 billion in 2015-16. Services account for a growing proportion [of] Australia's total trade with the EU, and will be an important component of any future free trade agreement.⁴

The delegation discussed the prospective FTA with Greece's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Terens-Nikolaos Quick MP. Deputy Minister Quick indicated that Greece was providing in principle support for such an agreement, and referred to the

3 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Country brief on Greece*, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/greece/Pages/greece-country-brief.aspx>.

4 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website, *Australia-European Union Free Trade Agreement*, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/aeufta/Pages/aeufta.aspx>.

European Commission's recently released draft negotiating directives for the FTA.⁵ Deputy Minister Quick also noted that negotiations would be carried out by the European Commission and countries would not be able to negotiate outside of the European Commission's position.

The delegation also discussed the FTA negotiations with members of the Greek-Australian Parliamentary Group, who highlighted the benefits to the Greek economy through the potential growth in exports.

While developments like the FTA were cited as potential trade opportunities, the delegation was also told that there may be a number of barriers to Greek exporters pursuing a market in Australia. In particular, the distance to Australia and the cost of transport for products was highlighted.



Senator Barry O'Sullivan, Mr Rob Mitchell MP, the Hon Terens-Nikolaos Quick MP, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Steve Georganas MP and Ms Sophia McIntyre, Chargé d'Affaires

In December 2017, the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, the Hon Steven Ciobo MP provided the following update on the FTA:

...Australia and the EU have been working toward commencement of negotiations on a comprehensive FTA since late 2015, which we expect to occur this year. As part of this work, I have recently had several

5 See: European Parliament, *International Agreements in Progress: EU-Australia free trade agreement – moving towards the launch of talks*, 11 October 2017, available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI\(2017\)608757](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2017)608757).

constructive discussions with EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström.⁶

Working and Holiday Visa Arrangement

In May 2014, Australia and Greece signed a Work and Holiday Visa Arrangement, which was subsequently approved by the Greek Parliament in December 2015.⁷

The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs noted the arrangements for the working holiday visa were being finalised and indicated that applications would soon be able to be received for the program.

The delegation provided the Deputy Minister with an overview of the opportunities for work for Greek working holiday visa holders in Australia, particularly, for seasonal agricultural work in regional areas.

Trade opportunities

The delegation discussed during a number of meetings the recovery of the Greek economy and the future economic opportunities for Greece.

In discussing economic opportunities during meetings on Crete, the discussion focussed on the need to develop a strong educational centre and create post graduate opportunities on the island to encourage well-trained graduates to stay in Crete.



Members of the delegation and the Regional Governor of Crete, Governor Stavros Arnaoutakis and Mr Andrea Biggi, Deputy Head of Mission

6 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Working towards an Australia-EU Free Trade Agreement', *Business Envoy*, 21 December 2017, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/trade-investment/business-envoy/Pages/january-2018/working-towards-an-australia-eu-free-trade-agreement.aspx>.

7 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Greece country brief*.

The delegation were pleased to tour the Creta Farms processing plant, a Crete-based producer of olive oil, meat and deli products. The company has expanded from distributing products through Greece to partnering with overseas companies who produce Creta's patented products. In this context, the delegation notes the strategic alliance between Creta Farms and Primo Meats in Australia to 'license Intellectual Property rights to Primo Meats so to locally produce Creta farms' unique products that are based on olive oil'.⁸



Members of the delegation and Mr Dimitris Kominis, Plant Manager, Creta Farms, and Mr Mironas Spitadakis, Quality Control Manager, Creta Farms

In terms of the export of products to Europe, the delegation heard that the small scale of production in Greece makes it difficult to compete against larger producers from other European countries.



Members of the delegation and the Vice-Governor for Crete responsible for Rethymno, Vice-Governor Maria Lioni and Mr Andrea Biggi, Deputy Head of Mission

8 See: Creta Farms, 'Strategic Alliance with Primo Meats SA', Press Release, 16 October 2014, available at: <http://www.cretafarms.gr/en/group/press-office/press-release/?pg=2>.



Members of the delegation and Mayor of Rethymno, Mr George Marinakis

Historic ties

The strength and warmth of the relationship between Greece and Australia was reiterated throughout the delegations meetings and visits. As noted above, part of the reason for the strong relationship between Australia and Greece is recognition of the role played, and sacrifices made by, Australian soldiers in defending Greece during World War II.

In Athens, the delegation visited the Phaleron War Cemetery. Two hundred and fifty-five Australians are buried at the Phaleron War Cemetery, and a further 329 Australians are buried at the co-located Athens War Memorial.



Wreath-laying at Phaleron War Cemetery, Athens, delegation members and Mr Andrea Biggi, Deputy Head of Mission

Remembering the Battle of Crete

In May 1941, Allied soldiers, including Australians, along with Greek troops, fought together in the Battle of Crete to defend the island from attacks by the German troops. While in Crete, the delegation visited a number of war memorials commemorating Australian involvement in, and Australian soldiers killed, during the Battle of Crete.

The delegation paid its respects at the Stavromenos Memorial, which was erected by the local community to pay tribute to the Australian soldiers. The delegation met with Mr George Polioudakis, whose father, Mr Markos Polioudakis, was instrumental in establishing the memorial.



Mr George Polioudakis and delegation members following the wreath laying at the Stavromenos Memorial

The delegation laid a wreath at the Hellenic-Australian Memorial Park in Rethymno. The Hellenic-Australian Memorial Park was dedicated on 19 May 2001, commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Battle for Crete.

The delegation also paid its respects at the 42nd St Battle of Crete ANZAC Memorial, near Chania in Crete. Australian and New Zealand troops were also involved in defending Tsikalarton Street, known to Commonwealth troops as '42nd Street', from German attacks on 27 May 1941. The defence mounted by the ANZAC soldiers delayed the German advance and enabled thousands of Allied soldiers to march to an evacuation point. Estimates vary, however it is believed that 11 Australian soldiers

and 26 New Zealand soldiers were killed at 42nd Street. The 42nd Street Memorial was dedicated on 19 May 2016.⁹



42nd Street Memorial

On its return to Australia the delegation has pursued issues in relation to the ongoing care and maintenance of both the Hellenic-Australian Memorial Park and the 42nd Street Memorial.

The delegation also laid a wreath at the Suda Bay Allied War Cemetery, where 1 500 servicemen from World War II are buried.

In recognition of the strong relationship between Australia and Crete, the delegation were honoured to host a lunch for members of the Cretan community with links to the Australian involvement in the Battle for Crete as well as officials representing religious, military and government organisations of Crete.

9 See: *42nd Street, Battle of Crete Anzac Memorial*, Commemorative Brochure, available at: <https://www.anzacsofgreece.org/en/events/past-events/1832-unveiling-of-42nd-street-anzac-memorial-chania-crete-19-may-2017>.



Lunch hosted by the delegation for members representing the Cretan community.

Border management

The arrival of migrants to Greece by sea from Turkey has been a significant issue in the area for a number of years. In July 2015, the UNHCR reported that there had been a 'major increase in refugees and migrants taking the 'eastern Mediterranean route' from Turkey to Greece'.¹⁰ The UNHCR continued:

More than 85 per cent of those arriving in Greece are from countries experiencing war and conflict, principally Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. From Greece, most move onwards across the Balkans to western and northern Europe.¹¹

By October 2015, there was a daily average of 6 360 people crossing from Turkey and arriving on the Greek islands.¹² Between November 2015 and March 2016, the European Council and Turkey worked together on a series of actions to increase coordination on migration management to address the increasing numbers of arrivals by sea into the EU. This work culminated in March 2016, with the EU-Turkey statement in which the parties agreed to:

- end the irregular migration flows from Turkey to the EU; and
- open up organised, safe and legal channels to Europe for Syrian refugees.

10 UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, *The sea route to Europe: The Mediterranean passage in the age of refugees*, 1 July 2015, p. 3.

11 UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, *The sea route to Europe: The Mediterranean passage in the age of refugees*, 1 July 2015, p. 3.

12 European Commission, *EU-Turkey Statement: The Commission's Contribution to the Leaders' Agenda*, 7 December 2017, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20171207_eu_turkey_statement_en.pdf.

The EU-Turkey Statement has led to a decrease of 97 per cent in irregular arrivals to the EU.

Given these changes in policy approach, the delegation were interested to meet with Mr Gregorio Apostolou, Head of Frontex Liaison Office (Frontex), in Athens. Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, was established in 2016. Mr Apostolou outlined how Frontex works to support the national authorities of EU member countries with the management of external borders. Mr Apostolou emphasised that the command of border operations always remained with the member nations and that Frontex's role was in coordination and assisting with operation design.

Mr Apostolou confirmed that there had been a reduction in people arriving in Greece by sea since the EU-Turkey Statement had been put in place. However, Mr Apostolou also indicated that, more recently, numbers of people arriving in Greece by sea had started to increase again. The delegation notes media reporting on this surge of arrivals through the northern summer in 2017, and the pressures that this has placed on camps on the Greek islands, such as Lesbos.¹³ Mr Apostolou also spoke to the delegation about the conditions in camps on the island.



*Delegation members and
Mr Grigorios Apostolou, Head of Frontex Liaison Office, Greece*

13 See: 'Surge in migration to Greece fuels misery in refugee camps', *The Guardian Australia*, 29 September 2017, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/29/surge-in-migration-to-greece-fuels-misery-in-refugee-camps>.

Turkey

Background

Despite over 100 years having passed, the Battle of Gallipoli remains a key event linking Australia and Turkey.

The Australian War Memorial summarised the context of and challenges of the Gallipoli campaign:

Most of the men recruited into the Australian Imperial Force at the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 were sent to Egypt to meet the threat which the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) posed to British interests in the Middle East and to the Suez Canal. After four and a half months of training near Cairo, the Australians departed by ship for the Gallipoli peninsula, together with troops from New Zealand, Britain, and France. The aim of this deployment was to assist a British naval operation which aimed to force the Dardanelles Strait and capture the Turkish capital, Constantinople.

The Australians landed at what became known as Anzac Cove on 25 April 1915, and they established a tenuous foothold on the steep slopes above the beach.

During the early days of the campaign, the allies tried to break through the Turkish lines and the Turks tried to drive the allied troops off the peninsula. Concerted but unsuccessful allied attempts to break through in August included the Australian attacks at Lone Pine and the Nek. All attempts ended in failure for both sides, and the ensuing stalemate continued for the remainder of 1915.¹⁴

The Australian War Memorial concluded with this sombre assessment of the Gallipoli campaign:

The most successful operation of the campaign was the evacuation of the troops on 19–20 December under cover of a comprehensive deception operation. As a result, the Turks were unable to inflict more than a very few casualties on the retreating forces. The whole Gallipoli operation, however, cost 26,111 Australian casualties, including 8,141 deaths. Despite this, it has been said that Gallipoli had no influence on the course of the war.¹⁵

This shared history was referred to in a number of the delegation's meetings, along with the recognition that it is now 50 years since Australia and Turkey established formal bilateral relations in 1967 with the signing of the agreement on assisted migration. The agreement resulted in an increase of the Turkey-born population in Australia from 1 544 at the 1961 Census to 11 589 in 1971.¹⁶ In the 2016 Census, the number of people in Australia who were born in Turkey was 32 180.

14 Australian War Memorial website, *Gallipoli*, available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/gallipoli>.

15 Australian War Memorial website, *Gallipoli*.

16 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Country brief for Turkey*, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/turkey/Pages/turkey-country-brief.aspx>.

In terms of trade, Turkey is Australia's 33rd largest merchandise trading partner, with two-way trade valued at almost \$1.3 billion in 2015:

Exports to Turkey were worth \$466 million, principal items being coal, gold and medicaments. Imports were valued at \$817 million, with principal items including gold, fruit and nuts, ships and boats, and construction materials.

Bilateral investment between the two countries is relatively small...Australian investment in Turkey was worth \$753 million in 2015, well ahead of Turkey's investment in Australia (A\$83million).¹⁷

The delegation's meetings in Turkey focussed on:

- political challenges facing Turkey;
- the conditions and support for refugees; and
- trade opportunities.

Political situation

Turkey's President, President Recep Erdoğan, was elected in August 2014, in the first ever direct presidential election. Prior to his election as President, Erdoğan had served as the Turkish Prime Minister, as leader of the 'Justice and Development Party' (AKP), since 2002.¹⁸ Erdoğan and AKP were re-elected in 2007 and 2011.

Elections held in June 2015 had inconclusive results and fresh elections took place in November 2015, with AKP once again elected to government. The June 2015 election also saw the rise of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), gaining 13 per cent of the vote. Although support for HDP decreased at the subsequent November 2015 election, it still gained enough support to retain parliamentary representation.

There have also been an increasing number of terrorist attacks throughout Turkey in recent years, including in the major cities of Ankara and Istanbul. Some attacks have been attributed to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and an associated organisation the Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK), while other attacks have been attributed to Daesh.

On 15 July 2016, sections of the Turkish armed forces attempted a coup. The Turkish Government has claimed that the exiled Turkish Islamic Cleric Fethulla Gulen was responsible for the coup:

Since the coup attempt, some 40,000 people have been detained, including 3,495 judges and prosecutors. Over 110,000 public officials have been suspended or dismissed in relation to the coup attempt, including more than 3,000 judges and prosecutors. More than 170 media outlets have been closed down, and many journalists detained. More than 1000 educational institutions have been closed.¹⁹

17 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Country brief for Turkey*.

18 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Country brief for Turkey*.

19 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Country brief for Turkey*.

Detention of members of human rights organisations

The delegation met with Amnesty International and representatives from other local human rights NGOs, who discussed the arrest of the Chair of Amnesty International Turkey, Mr Taner Kiliç, and the subsequent detention of ten members of human rights organisations, including the Director of Amnesty International Turkey, at a digital literacy workshop in Istanbul.²⁰

The delegation notes media reports that the charges against Mr Kiliç and the so-called 'Istanbul-10' related to terrorism and aiding militants.²¹

According to reports by Amnesty International, all of the ten people arrested at the workshop in Istanbul were detained for nearly two weeks. At this time four of the group were released on bail and the remaining six defendants were remanded in custody.²²

The concerns relayed to the delegation included issues with the arrest, investigation and detention of the group of people at the workshop in Istanbul, for example:

- that those detained were prevented from contacting lawyers and family for more than 24 hours after their detention;
- the investigation files were closed and were not able to be accessed by the defendants and their lawyers;
- limited information was provided to the defendants and their lawyers about the charges and indictments against them;
- some of the defendants have been kept in solitary confinement during their detention for long periods of time; and
- communications with lawyers and families is restricted.

The delegation notes subsequent updates about Mr Kiliç and the 'Istanbul 10':

20 See: Amnesty International, *Turkey: Charging of Activists, including Amnesty Director, a crushing blow for rights*, 18 July 2017, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org.au/turkey-charging-activists-including-amnesty-director-crushing-blow-rights/>. The so-called 'Istanbul 10' were comprised of representatives of a number of organisations, including two members of the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly and Amnesty International Turkey's Director, Ms İdil Eser. The group also included a consultant and a trainer who were visiting Turkey to present at the workshop.

21 See: 'Senior Amnesty figures among 11 on trial in Turkey on terror charges', *The Guardian Australia*, 26 October 2017, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/25/amnesty-turkish-chair-taner-kilic-on-trial-over-failed-coup>.

22 Amnesty International, *Jailing of activists, including Amnesty director, a crushing blow for rights in Turkey*, 18 July 2017, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/07/jailing-of-activists-including-amnesty-director-a-crushing-blow-for-rights-in-turkey/>.

- on 26 October 2017, the remaining members of the 'Istanbul 10' were released on bail, however, Mr Kiliç remained in detention;²³
- on 31 January 2018, a Turkish court ordered the release of Mr Kiliç from detention;²⁴ and
- the prosecution subsequently appealed Mr Kiliç's release and he was re-detained.²⁵



Delegation members, His Excellency Mr Marc Innes-Brown, Australian Ambassador to Turkey, Mr Andrew Cooper and Dr Oytun Deliktas, of the Australian Embassy in Turkey, meet with representatives from Amnesty International and representatives from other local human rights NGOs

Meeting with the Interior Affairs Committee

The delegation also discussed the broader political situation with government members of the Turkish Parliament's Interior Affairs Committee. The Chair of the committee, the Hon Celalettin Güvenç MP, emphasised that the government was democratically elected and was supported by 52 per cent of the vote at a popular election. The Chair indicated that the government is being challenged by forces outside of the political sphere who wished to defeat the government by other means.

Delegation members raised the detention of representatives of non-government organisations and the apparent delays in the judicial process.

23 Amnesty International, *Turkey: Court releases human rights defenders including Amnesty International's Turkey Director*, 26 October 2017, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org.au/turkey-court-releases-human-rights-defenders-including-amnesty-internationals-turkey-director/>.

24 'Turkish court orders release of Amnesty's Taner Kiliç', *Al Jazeera News*, 1 February 2018, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/turkish-court-orders-release-amnesty-taner-kilic-180131175834456.html>.

25 'US berates Turkey for re-arrest of Amnesty International official', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 February 2018, available at: <http://www.smh.com.au/world/us-beratesturkey-for-re-arrest-of-amnesty-international-official-20180207-p4yzm3.html>.

The members of the Interior Affairs Committee acknowledged there were some problems with the judicial process. The Chair attributed these problems to the involvement of prosecutors and members of the judiciary in the coup of 2016, who had since been removed from these positions, leaving a younger and inexperienced judiciary.

Given the delays in bringing cases to trial, the delegation explored with the Interior Affairs Committee the possibility of releasing, on bail, people who had spent long periods in detention without facing trial. The Chair acknowledged Australia's concerns in relation to these issues and assured the delegation that the Justice and Interior Ministries were working to resolve these matters.



Delegation members and His Excellency Mr Marc Innes-Brown, Australian Ambassador to Turkey, meet with the Chair, Deputy Chair and members of the Turkish Parliament's Interior Affairs Committee

Conditions and services for refugees in Turkey

As noted above, in March 2016, the EU Council and Turkey agreed to the EU-Turkey Statement, one aspect of which was to end the end the irregular migration flows from Turkey to the EU. As part of the EU-Turkey Statement, the EU 'has supported Turkey in its efforts to host refugees and is well on track to contract the €3 billion from its Facility for Refugees in Turkey by the end of 2017'.²⁶

According to the UNHCR, as of October 2017, Turkey hosts the world's largest refugee population, with approximately 3.5 million refugees in the country. More than 90 per cent of refugees in Turkey live outside of camps. Refugees from Syria form the largest sub-population, with approximately 3.2 million of the refugees in Turkey from that country.²⁷

26 European Commission, *EU-Turkey Statement: The Commission's Contribution to the Leaders' Agenda*, 7 December 2017, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20171207_eu_turkey_statement_en.pdf.

27 UNHCR, *Turkey: Fact Sheet*, October 2017, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/unhcr-turkey-factsheet-october-2017>.

The delegation acknowledges the significant refugee population in Turkey and the support provided by the Turkish government for refugees. The delegation discussed in a number of its meetings the conditions and support for refugees in Turkey.

The delegation visited the UNHCR Field Office in Istanbul to meet with representatives from the UNHCR and discuss the implications of such a large refugee population in Turkey. The delegation were advised that the UNHCR is trying to ensure access for Syrian refugees to:

- social services;
- medical assistance; and
- education.

The UNHCR representatives noted delays in registering refugees for temporary protection and difficulties in capturing the necessary data for registration. The representatives also expressed concerns regarding the provision of education to refugees. Approximately half of the refugees are under 18, and the UNHCR noted that once a child has been out of school for three years, it is unlikely that they will return to formal education.

It was also noted that one of the difficulties in reaching refugees is that 80 per cent of refugees from Syria are not in camps. Offering outreach services to the out-of-camp population is placing pressure on the UNHCR resources.

The delegation noted the size of the refugee population in Turkey and asked about whether there were any difficulties for refugees settling into the Turkish community. The delegation were informed that Turkish society has absorbed the refugees, but tensions can be high in smaller cities where populations of refugees may be more visible.

The UNHCR representatives noted that resettlement of refugees could take a long time. The UNHCR's Fact Sheet on Turkey stated:

Nearly 29,000 refugees were submitted for resettlement in 2016, and the current target for 2017 is 32,000 individuals.²⁸

The UNHCR noted the Turkish Government's strong support of refugees.

Trade opportunities

In meetings with a number of Turkish parliamentary committees, the delegation also discussed trade opportunities between Turkey and Australia.

The Hon Ibrahim Turhan MP, Chair of the Turkish Parliamentary Friendship Group indicated that a priority was the establishment of a direct flight between Turkey and Australia for Turkish Airlines. The delegation notes media reporting of plans by Turkish Airlines to expand into the Australian market, firstly with services with a stop-over in Asia, and later introducing non-stop flights between Australia and

Turkey.²⁹ While direct flights were foreshadowed in 2013, the start date for the service has been delayed.³⁰ Mr Turhan advocated for Istanbul becoming a hub for Australian's visiting Europe once Australia and Turkey were serviced by a direct flight between the countries.

Mr Turhan highlighted the mining sector as an area where Australian companies may have some opportunities in Turkey, particular in relation to drilling technology. The Austrade website describes Turkey as 'one of the world's most promising and dynamic mining destinations'.³¹

The delegation canvassed options for agricultural trade with the Hon Recep Konuk MP, Chair of the Agricultural, Forestry and Rural Affairs Committee. Mr Konuk noted that Turkey is an importer of meat and is taking steps to increase beef cattle production. Mr Konuk referred to the recent importation of Brangus cattle to use as breeding stock.



The Hon Mr Ibrahim Turhan MP, Chair of the Turkey Parliamentary Friendship Group with delegation members.

Mr Rob Mitchell MP
Delegation Leader

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- 29 See: 'Australia to Europe non-stop flights? They're just around the corner', *Traveller*, 3 June 2013, available at: <http://www.traveller.com.au/australia-to-europe-nonstop-flights-theyre-just-around-the-corner-2nkyf>; and David Flynn, 'Turkish Airlines gearing up to start Istanbul-Sydney flights', *Australian Business Traveller*, 31 August 2015, available at: <https://www.ausbt.com.au/turkish-airlines-gearing-up-to-start-istanbul-sydney-flights>.
- 30 David Flynn, 'Turkish Airlines pushes back on Istanbul-Sydney flights', *Australian Business Traveller*, 26 February 2016.
- 31 See: Australian Trade and Investment Commission webpage, *Mining to Turkey*, available at: <https://www.austrade.gov.au/Australian/Export/Export-markets/Countries/Turkey/Industries/Mining>.