



PARLIAMENT of AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

Public Hearing

Issue date: 16 March 2017

Committee Vets Classified Information Agreement with France

Thursday 16 March 2017

Australia's [Classified Information Agreement with France](#) will be examined on Monday by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.

The Agreement provides a framework for protecting the exchange of classified information between Australia and France and allows for the mutual recognition of security clearances issued by either country. Australia has similar agreements with the United States, Japan, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The Agreement is a whole-of-government agreement - allowing all government agencies to exchange classified information with their French counterparts. It was tabled alongside the [Future Submarine Framework Agreement](#) and will support the delivery of Australia's Future Submarine.

[Committee Chair, the Hon Stuart Robert MP](#), says that the lengthy process of applying for security clearances has been a problem for businesses competing for government work.

"The Committee believes this is the first agreement where Australia will be obliged to recognise the security clearance granted to a person by another country when in Australia. The Committee will look to ensure that the Australian and French vetting practices are robust enough to protect Australia's classified information" Mr Robert said.

"The recognition of security clearances issued by France could disadvantage Australian contractors who do not hold current Australian security clearances. The Committee has heard that the process of applying for security clearances, particularly the need to be sponsored by a government agency, is an obstacle for Australian businesses in bidding for work.

The Future Submarine Program is intended to maximise Australian industry involvement, and we need to make sure these Agreements do not unfairly discriminate against, or impose extra burdens on, Australian companies."

The Committee will hear from the Attorney General's Department, the Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the implications of the Agreement.

The public hearing will be live broadcast and available [here](#).



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