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Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

Inquiry: Audit Report No. 5 (2017-18) *Protecting Australia's Missions and Staff Overseas: Follow-on*

Opening Statement, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

Jennifer Rawson, Deputy Secretary, DFAT

7 February 2018

Chair and Committee Members

Thank you for the invitation to appear before the Committee.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) regards its responsibility for protecting staff, property and information at Australia's overseas missions as one of its highest priorities. We are continually reviewing our security procedures and systems to ensure they are as robust as possible.

DFAT welcomed the ANAO's report *Protecting Australia's Missions and Staff Overseas: Follow-on* and accepted all of its recommendations.

The Report's recommendations align broadly with those identified in an internal review commissioned by DFAT in 2015, many of which were being implemented during the audit.

DFAT has commenced a process to implement the Report's findings where this was not already underway.

A strategic plan, which identifies DFAT's security priorities to enable and support the department's key business activities, has been developed. A key mechanism for delivering the strategic plan is DFAT's new Security Framework, which will be launched in March 2018.

The Framework, which the Report endorsed as 'soundly framed', will replace the existing compliance-based security manual with a security framework that explicitly integrates risk management principles into security policy development and decision making. The Framework will provide the flexibility to adapt to the rapidly changing international security environment and to address the Department's future security needs.

We have established an improved governance process to better coordinate and achieve greater consistency when determining security measures to be deployed overseas.

We have also commenced work on developing database solutions identified in the Report's recommendations, including for security clearance management.

There is work underway to strengthen our security capabilities. The security training program has, and continues to be, redeveloped to improve the preparedness of DFAT and other agency staff for deployment overseas. New programs and courses have been added to our training catalogue and existing courses have been refreshed and updated. Training for Post Security Officers, who are the primary security resource at overseas posts, has been supplemented throughout 2017 by workshops aimed at familiarising Post Security Officers with the new Framework.

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We are also working to strengthen the Department's security culture, including with security awareness outreach campaigns to communicate key security messages across the department's global network. In March 2018, a 'Security Week' campaign will provide further emphasis on staff security awareness to coincide with the launch of the DFAT Security Framework.

My colleagues and I would be very happy to answer any questions you may have.