

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Review of the Defence Annual Report 2015-16 – 17 February 2017

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Defence Attaches – Defence Industry - Training

Question reference number: 9

Senator: Reynolds

Type of question: Spoken on Friday, 17 February 2017, Hansard page 47

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 6 March 2017

Question:

Ms Skinner: Generally it is a three-year or two-year posting. There are, I think, occasions where it might even be a bit shorter than that depending on what is considered the hardship at the post and how the post is managed. That is right. Our course is always being reformed as we move through time. Probity is a key part of the course for a range of issues, particularly when many of the DAs also administer large cooperative programs within countries where the governance systems are not as strong as you would expect in Australia. Probity is a key part of the discussion and the education of DAs. At this point, there is not an export module or a capability module of that training, but, as we think through that role and we get a bit more of a stronger view about what contribution they can make, we will have a look at that.

CHAIR: Presumably that assessment over the course of the year will be in place for the next cycle of postings at the end of the year. What about DAs who were already posted overseas and were already in place as this policy came into being?

Ms Skinner: We are able to provide advice to them about what those sorts of expectations are, and we have done that.

CHAIR: I understand that you have a conference for DAs in March.

Ms Skinner: Yes. The First Assistant Secretary of the International Policy Division would have that specific detail. I do not have that with me.

CHAIR: Is that going to be a topic that will be brought up with them? Do they actually have to ask for more information on it or will you be proactively covering that?

Ms Skinner: I do not know exactly what is on that program, but we will take that on notice. It would be our intention to cover that because DAs will ask about it anyway. I think our program will be to provide advice to them on that.

CHAIR: Could you take that specific question on notice and also come back and provide more information specifically for DAs, given it is such a forward-leaning position in terms of our international face and our diplomacy? If you could provide more information, that would be much appreciated.

Ms Skinner: Sure.

Answer:

Defence conducts a three-week long Defence Attaché Seminar in October each year to prepare Defence Australian Public Service and Australian Defence Force personnel (including Defence Attachés) who are about to be posted as attaché staff to overseas diplomatic missions.

The seminar program is constantly refined, and includes feedback from current and previous attaché staff.

Between 2010 and 2013 the Defence Attaché Seminar included a presentation from the Defence Export Unit, now known as the Australian Military Sales Office. A presentation on Australian Military Sales Office was not included in the 2014 Defence Attaché Seminar because of program constraints.

The 2015 and 2016 Defence Attaché Seminars included a presentation from the Australian Military Sales Office on matters relating to Australian defence industry and how Defence Attachés assist in supporting stakeholders, as well as recent case studies. The 2016 Defence Attaché Seminar also included a presentation from Defence Industry Policy Division on implementation of the Defence Industry Policy Statement and advice on engagement with Australian industry.

Future seminars for pre posting preparation and Defence Attaché updates will include more content on Australian defence industry related topics and training. The next seminar is planned to occur in October 2017. Defence does not have a Defence Attaché conference planned for March 2017.

Defence has commenced work on the Defence Export Strategy which is expected to be released in late 2017. The Strategy will plan, guide and measure defence export outcomes in support of Australia's foreign and trade policy, defence industry and defence capability and national security objectives.

Defence Attachés will play an important role in the development and implementation of the Strategy.

The Strategy will provide a campaign approach to defence exports, which will include Defence Attachés, particularly in terms of identifying opportunities and advocacy.

The Strategy will also address training and development needs to help Australian officials, including Defence Attachés, to more effectively support Australian defence industry exports.