



Embassy of the United States of America
Canberra, Australia

August 26, 2021

Dear Senator:

Thank you for your invitation to provide a submission on the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade References Committee's inquiry into opportunities for advancing Australia's strategic interests through existing regional architecture.

I trust the enclosed information will be of assistance to your committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if the Embassy can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Michael Goldman
Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.

Senator Kimberley Kitching,
Chair, Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade
References Committee,
Parliament House,
Canberra.



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Submission: Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade References Committee inquiry into opportunities for advancing Australia's strategic interests through existing regional architecture.

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The United States values its collaboration with Australia on a range of regional and global issues.

As President Biden made clear in his introduction to the Administration's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, in a moment of accelerating global challenges "one thing is certain: we will only succeed in advancing American interests and upholding our universal values by working in common cause with our closest allies and partners, and by renewing our own enduring sources of national strength." Further, "if we work together with our democratic partners, with strength and confidence, we will meet every challenge and outpace every challenger."

Our two nations share with the international community a range of major challenges – COVID-19, climate change, and the disruptive impact of emerging technologies – that require coordinated effort. More than ever, it is imperative for countries that share basic perspectives, values, and interests to collaborate on these common challenges.

Among the bodies your inquiry cites, the Quad provides a unique avenue for likeminded countries to advance cooperation on regional challenges while reinforcing international rules and shared values. Together with Australia, the United States shares with Japan and India a vision of a free, open, inclusive, resilient, and healthy Indo-Pacific region, unconstrained by coercion and anchored by democratic values. Informed by shared values, the Quad allows for coordination and collaboration on a variety of important issues, including COVID-19 vaccination, post-pandemic economic recovery, the climate crisis, maritime security, and infrastructure.

In March, President Biden convened a virtual meeting of Quad heads of government, the first leader-level summit in the Quad's history. During this, his first multilateral summit, President Biden remarked that "the Quad is going to be a vital arena for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific." Leaders expect to hold an in-

person summit by the end of 2021, and that Foreign Ministers converse often and meet at least once a year.

The March summit demonstrated the utility of the Quad as a forum for engagement on a broad array of issues, from promoting democratic resilience and a rules-based order, to COVID-19, climate change, and shared challenges like cyberspace, critical technologies, counterterrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The Quad Vaccine Partnership is a tangible example of collaboration among Quad countries, in which partners are drawing on their respective strengths to collaboratively expand manufacturing and distribution of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. Quad leaders are working to strengthen equitable vaccine access for the Indo-Pacific, with close coordination with multilateral organizations including the World Health Organization and COVAX.

At the March summit leaders also launched a critical and emerging technology working group to facilitate cooperation on international standards and innovative technologies of the future.

Australia and the United States are engaging in substantial regional multilateralism to work together on many issues facing the region. We share a common vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. We are both strong advocates for ASEAN centrality and coordinate our support to ASEAN closely. We are both active in supporting a rules-based order and international law in the Indo-Pacific, including as it relates to the South and East China Seas. We partner in APEC to increase women's economic participation, strengthen structural reform, and promote the digital economy.

The United States shares Australia's view of the Mekong region as strategically important, and we have increased our coordination on assistance (both countries provided a combined USD 8.6 billion for economic connectivity, sustainable resource management, and human resources development in 2015-19). Together with Australia, the United States is committed to delivering development assistance to our Pacific neighbors, and our two countries coordinate closely. In October 2020, the United States and Australia, together with Japan, announced the first project under our Trilateral Infrastructure Partnership to fund construction of an undersea internet cable to Palau.

The climate crisis poses serious short, medium, and long-term challenges for countries throughout the Indo-Pacific region, nowhere more so than in the Pacific. Climate change is a critical area where the United States and Australia are well placed to work together, to help each other and our Pacific neighbors face these challenges effectively, and to demonstrate leadership in the region to enhance implementation of the Paris Agreement, including by making ambitious efforts to

reduce our own respective national emissions to help get the world on track to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The United States has put forward a nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement to reduce emissions 50 to 52 percent below 2005 levels by 2030, and we invite Australia to match our level of ambition over the coming decade. We are also focused on protecting populations and helping them recover from increasing extreme weather events and other consequences, while transforming economies to reduce our carbon footprints and build a sustainable future. As President Biden articulated at the Munich Security Conference, the United States shares with the world an understanding of the climate crisis as an economic, humanitarian, environmental, and security threat, the greatest of our generation. Combatting climate change requires concerted effort and increased ambition to reduce greenhouse emissions.

The United States and Australia's common vision of a free, open, inclusive, resilient, and healthy Indo-Pacific requires respect for international rules, commitment to human rights, and a dedication to combatting corruption. We are confident that strong democracies – with their dedication to vibrant civil societies, robust political participation, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and open and transparent governance – are uniquely positioned to deliver that common vision for their people and for the region as a whole.

Buoyed by shared values and sacrifice, across decades, the U.S.-Australia Alliance is a force for good in the world. Our Alliance is central to the Quad, as it is to a number of other vital regional and international groupings, from the G7+ to the Five Eyes. The United States is confident that, together, we and Australia will continue to lead.