



Treaty fast-tracked in the wake of MH17 disaster

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties today released its report into a treaty between Australia and the Netherlands, regarding the presence of Australian personnel in the Netherlands in response to the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17.

After the tragedy in July 2014, Australian personnel from the Department of Defence and the Federal Police were deployed at short notice to the Netherlands and a treaty was required to ensure the protection of their rights.

Under the circumstances, a National Interest Exemption meant the treaty was fast-tracked and came into force on the day it was signed by both countries.

The committee found that there was justification for the National Interest Exemption to be invoked. This was only the seventh time the exemption had been used since the treaty-making process was reformed in 1996.

Committee Chair, Wyatt Roy MP, explained that the treaty making process has provision for such urgencies.

“Personnel needed to be deployed rapidly and it was essential that the legal framework was in place to enable this sensitive and important work to be undertaken without delay, so the fast-tracking was justified.

“This treaty was necessary to ensure that Operation Bring Them Home could proceed quickly and efficiently and that the Australian personnel involved were adequately protected,” Mr Roy said.

The committee formally acknowledged the tragic and difficult circumstances under which Australian personnel were deployed, reiterated their condolences to the victim’s families and paid tribute to the work of Australian personnel.

The full report is available on the Committee’s website: <http://www.aph.gov.au/jsct> or by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

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