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MEDIA RELEASE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TREATIES

Several treaty actions referred

Issue date: 9 February 2016

Submarine deal under review by Treaties Committee

Thursday 9 February 2017

The Treaties Committee commenced reviews into six treaty actions this week, including two agreements with France in support of the Future Submarine Program.

The Treaties Committee examines the terms of each treaty signed by the Government and assesses whether it is in Australia's national interest. The Government cannot finalise treaty actions without the Committee's endorsement and recommendation that the treaty proceed.

Submarine and Classified Information Exchange Agreements with France

Two agreements with France have been referred to the Committee. The [Future Submarine Program Agreement](#) provides the international legal framework for the Government's Future Submarine Program. The Agreement provides for the transfer of French Government-owned information relating to the design, build, operation and sustainment of the Future Submarine to the Australian Government.

It also notes the importance of Australia's efforts to maximise Australian industry involvement in the design, build and maintenance of the Future Submarine and provides opportunities for Australian and French industry cooperation in the project.

[Committee Chair, the Hon Mr Stuart Robert MP](#) said the Future Submarine Program is a \$50 billion investment in Australia's submarine capability and represents the largest defence acquisition in Australia's history.

"It is important that Australia establish and maintain a full, enduring, regionally superior and self-reliant Future Submarine capability. The Committee's inquiry into the Agreement will review the treaty's terms and ensure that Australia's interests are duly advanced," Mr Robert said.

The Committee will also examine the [Classified Information Exchange Agreement](#) with France.

"As with previous classified information exchange agreements, the Committee will seek to ensure that Australian classified information provided to France, or a French contractor, is handled appropriately, is sufficiently protected and is accessed only by those duly authorised," Mr Robert said.

The Committee will report on the Future Submarine Program Agreement by 15 June and the Classified Information Exchange Agreement by 9 May.



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Revised Social Security Agreement with New Zealand

The Committee will also review a revised [Social Security Agreement with New Zealand](#), a bilateral treaty which closes gaps in social security coverage for people who migrate between Australia and New Zealand.

Australia has 30 bilateral social security agreements. These agreements overcome barriers to pension payment in the domestic legislation of each country, such as requirements on citizenship, minimum contributions record, past residence record and current country of residence. Typically, the main beneficiaries of these agreements are age pensioners.

Mr Robert said social security agreements are regularly reviewed by the Committee.

“The existing agreement with New Zealand is Australia’s most significant, and a revised agreement has the potential to impact many Australians living over the Tasman,” Mr Robert said.

Approximately 600,000 New Zealand citizens live in Australia, and approximately 60,000 Australians live in New Zealand.

The Government states the revised Agreement will save approximately \$16.1 million in the first four years. The existing Agreement signed in 2002 generates pension flows to Australia of about \$263 million a year, and Australia pays about \$71.5 million a year into New Zealand.

The Committee will report on the revised Agreement by 9 May 2017.

Other Agreements referred

Three other treaty actions were referred to the Committee for examination:

- [Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology](#) – report due by 10 May 2017
- [Loan Agreement between Australia and the International Monetary Fund](#) – report due by 15 June 2017
- [Agreement concerning the Adoption of Harmonized Technical United Nations Regulations for Wheeled Vehicles and the Conditions for Reciprocal Recognition of Approvals Granted on the Basis of these United Nations Regulations](#) – report due by 15 June 2017

Information about all treaties under review, include treaty texts, is available from the [Committee’s website](#). The Committee invites submissions from individuals and organisations by 28 February 2016.

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