

Inquiry into the Provisions of the Australian Civilian Corps Bill 2010

Submission by World Vision Australia July 2010

World Vision Australia (WVA) welcomes the creation of an Australian Civilian Corps (ACC). This submission comments on the proposed Bill, however in doing so we note that much of the detail of the ACC's function and mandate will be specified in subsequent ACC Values, Code of Conduct or other operational guidelines. This submission therefore addresses some issues that may ultimately be dealt with in those later guidelines.

WVA is encouraged by the clear placement in the legislation of the ACC under the control of the Director General of AusAID. It is important for an effective and cohesive aid program that all its elements are aligned and this is best achieved by having all arms of the aid program managed under one authority. The recent Australian National Audit Office Report (ANAO) audit report *AusAID's Management of an Expanding Aid Program* found that the quality of operational frameworks for whole-of-government coordination has been variable and sometimes poor, with government agencies guided by their different mandates rather than a coherent whole-of-government approach to Australia's aid initiatives.¹

As a highly visible new element of Australia's aid program, the ACC needs to be seen to be part of AusAID and to be fully aligned with Australia's international development and humanitarian objectives. While noting that the detail of this alignment will be described in the ACC Values, Code of Conduct or other operational guidelines, WVA considers that a clause should be inserted into the draft bill to describe the purpose of the ACC.

Recommendation 1: WVA suggests that the legislation should specify the purpose of the ACC with regard to the achievement of Australia's humanitarian and development objectives.

Clause 24 (1) states that "The Director-General may arrange for an Australian Civilian Corps employee to be seconded for a specified period to any body or organisation (including an international body or organisation)." Secondments are a welcome and necessary part of the ACC. However WVA is concerned that the terms of secondment as specified in this clause leave the door open for inappropriate deployments, particularly in humanitarian or emergency situations in which the roles of civilian and military actors must be clearly defined. WVA recommends that this clause be expanded to address this issue:

24 (1) The Director-General may arrange for an Australian Civilian Corps employee to be seconded for a specified period to any body or organisation (including an international body or organisation), *where purpose of the transfer is consistent with the guidelines of the Australian Civilian Corps and other international principles including those of civil-military cooperation.*

Recommendation 2: WVA suggests that Clause 24 (1) be amended to specify that secondments must be consistent with the guidelines of the Australian Civilian Corps and other international principles including those of principles of civil-military cooperation.

WVA would welcome the opportunity to contribute its experience in humanitarian issues, including civil-military cooperation, to the development of the ACC Values and other overarching documents.

Any enquiries, please contact:

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¹ Australian National Audit Office Report *AusAID's Management of an Expanding Aid Program – Audit Report No.15 2009-10 Performance Audit* pg. 110 – 111 available at http://www.anao.gov.au/uploads/documents/2009-10_Audit_Report_15.pdf