

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

QoN 002 – 07 July 2021

Topic: Language allowance

Senator Kimberley Kitching

Question

CHAIR: Did you say there is a language loading or a recognition at 3 and 4?

Mr Stanier: Yes. David's probably better placed than me.

Mr Lawrence: I'd have to take it on notice. We pay our staff a language allowance to maintain their language skills. After we've trained them and they've passed the tests that we put them through, we pay an allowance based on the level at which they pass the test. It is an encouragement for them to maintain that language skill so that we don't lose that capability we've invested so heavily in.

Answer

Yes, Language Proficiency Allowance is payable to DFAT staff who hold current language proficiency at Level 3 and above.

Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Inquiry into funding for public research into foreign policy issues

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

003 – 12 July 2021

Topic: HR modernisation

Senator Kimberley Kitching

Question

You touched on the HR modernisation program at the hearing. Can you tell us more about this program? What sorts of skills is DFAT looking to build? Will this impact how much it relies on external organisations for specialised research?

Answer

HR Modernisation is a three-year phased program of work to 30 June 2023 to reform DFAT's human resources (HR) model. HR Modernisation reforms include professionalising HR functions, a HR business partner model, devolving HR delegations and budgets to leaders, and a revised capability framework.

We are working to develop revised departmental capability framework, which will define the core, role specific and leadership people capabilities DFAT needs now and into the future in order to continue to deliver for government. It will provide a foundational capability library from which to develop a strategic workforce plan, which will identify the number of staff and types of capabilities DFAT will need into the future.

The department draws on the capabilities of specialist organisations for discrete work packages, including specialised advice and research, where the capability required is either highly specialised, or unlikely to be an enduring requirement.

Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Inquiry into funding for public research into foreign policy issues

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

004 – 12 July 2021

Topic: Security clearance process

Senator Kimberley Kitching

Question

Does the security clearance process stop or deter people with specific skills sets from securing employment with DFAT?

Answer

No. DFAT security clearance processes are designed to protect Australian Government people, information and assets. The process is conducted in line with the security clearance requirements as outlined in the government's Protective Security Policy Framework. Government's security clearance processes do not assess an individual's skill set but rather the trustworthiness of the individual with reference to the attributes of honesty, integrity, judgement, loyalty, and vulnerability to improper influence or coercion.

Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Inquiry into funding for public research into foreign policy issues

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

005 – 12 July 2021

Topic: Foreign policy research

Senator Kimberley Kitching

Does DFAT have a view on the merits of a 'foreign policy ASPI'?

To what extent is there whole-of-government coordination on funding for foreign policy research?

Some consider that think tanks focus too much on commentary rather than original research and that funding should be tied to empirical, data-driven research. What is DFAT's view?

Do you see merit in the proposal for standing funds for thematic research areas such as human security and peacemaking?

Has DFAT reviewed other countries' models for balancing funding for in-house classified government information with externally-produced and public information?

Has DFAT considered establishing a searchable database of foreign policy research, either generally or on specific topics or countries?

Answer

Does DFAT have a view on the merits of a 'foreign policy ASPI'?

This idea has not been proposed formally to DFAT or to Government. DFAT does not currently have a Departmental position on this idea.

To what extent is there whole-of-government coordination on funding for foreign policy research?

Funding for foreign policy research is provided through a range of different mechanisms, often with discrete objectives. For example, in many cases DFAT funds research through Australia's official development assistance (ODA) program where there is a clear development benefit. In other instances, the Department's funding is provided via grants through DFAT-managed Foundations, Councils and Institutes (FCIs) which cover a range of bilateral and regional relationships. Funding decisions within each mechanism are assessed against the merits and considerations relevant to the specific objective, as well as whole-of-government priorities.

Some consider that think tanks focus too much on commentary rather than original research and that funding should be tied to empirical, data-driven research. What is DFAT's view?

DFAT considers the quality of public research in Australia to be high.