
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Review of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence Annual Reports, 2000-2001

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

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Foreword

This report is the result of the first general review by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade of annual reports from the government agencies within its area of interest.

Traditionally, Senate committees, not Joint or House committees, have conducted general annual report reviews. We decided to review the annual reports from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, AusAID, Austrade and the Department of Defence for two main reasons:

- first, to make an active contribution to the processes by which the Parliament holds the Executive and its agencies to account; and
- second, to seek status reports on various policy and operational issues outlined in the annual reports.

The review involved two public hearings: one conducted by the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee, the other by the Defence Sub-Committee. A broad range of issues were canvassed at these hearings, many of them also of interest to our Trade and Human Rights Sub-Committees.

From our perspective, the review has been very useful. Not only has it contributed to the accountability process, it has allowed us to consider issues which may warrant closer examination by way of specific inquiry.

We expect that annual report reviews will become a regular part of the Committee's work program.

Senator Alan Ferguson
Committee Chairman

Hon David Jull MP
Chairman
Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee

Hon Bruce Scott MP
Chairman
Defence Sub-Committee

Membership of the Committee

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Secretary to the Defence Sub-Committee

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Terms of reference

Pursuant to paragraph 1 (b) of its resolution of appointment, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade is empowered to consider and report on the annual reports of government agencies, in accordance with a schedule presented by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.¹

The Speaker's schedule lists annual reports from agencies within the Defence and Foreign Affairs portfolios as being available for review by the Committee.²

On 21 March 2002 the Committee resolved to hold public hearings to review the 2000-2001 annual reports from the Department of Defence, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade).

1 See *Journals of the Senate*, No. 3, 14 February 2002 and *Votes and Proceedings*, No. 3, 14 February 2002

2 See *Votes and Proceedings*, No. 3, 14 February 2002



List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Department of Defence should, in preparing reports of unacceptable behaviour, separate incidents into 'serious' and 'less serious'. The types of behaviour that fall into these categories should be defined in the report (paragraph 3.40).

Recommendation 2

The Department of Veterans Affairs should develop an information package clarifying what Australian Defence Force conditions of service equate to under the provisions of the *Veterans Entitlements Act 1986* (paragraph 4.19).

Recommendation 3

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) should develop information fact sheets for all deployments covered by DVA, stating what benefits and assistance are available to Australian Defence Force personnel serving on those deployments. This information should be posted on the DVA website (paragraph 4.20).

Recommendation 4

The Department of Defence should develop a compulsory survey questionnaire which should be provided to all ADF personnel three to six months after returning from an operational deployment. This survey is in addition to the ADF Census which is held every four years (paragraph 4.28).

Recommendation 5

The ADF Census should be amended to ensure that a person in a defacto relationships is no longer regarded as 'single' (paragraph 4.29).

Recommendation 6

The Department of Defence must ensure that the use of decompression periods for all ADF personnel returning from operational deployments is mandatory (paragraph 4.51).

Recommendation 7

The Auditor-General should consider conducting a performance audit focusing on transition management programs conducted by the Department of Defence (paragraph 4.76).

Recommendation 8

The Department of Defence should provide access to outplacement services for all ADF personnel as part of the Career Transition Assistance Scheme (paragraph 4.89).

Recommendation 9

The Department of Defence should provide access to specialised employment services for the spouses of ADF personnel (paragraph 4.90).

