



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Human Rights Sub-Committee

MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: 4 July 2006

Chair: Sen Marise Payne
Deputy: Maria Vamvakinou MP

Australia's aid program in the Pacific under parliamentary review

New inquiry examines human rights and security

Federal Parliament's Human Rights Sub-Committee is to conduct a new inquiry into Australia's aid program in the Pacific.

The Sub-Committee, chaired by Senator Marise Payne, is part of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade.

The Committee will review the impact of Australian aid to the Pacific in promoting and enhancing human rights and security in the region. The inquiry will focus on:

- Strengthening law and justice;
- Improving economic management and public accountability institutions;
- Maintaining access to basic services (especially health);
- Anti-corruption and good governance measures; and
- Supporting peace-building and community and civil society development.

Aid flows to the region have increased significantly in recent years, with aid currently standing at \$463 million a year. More than half of this amount is directed to the Solomon Islands.

Announcing the new inquiry, Senator Payne said that, "the current review provides an opportunity to review Australia's ongoing commitment to development in the Pacific region, and to survey the impact of initiatives like the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI)."

The Sub-Committee has already addressed some of these topics in its previous reports, *The Link between Aid and Human Rights* and *Human Rights and Good Governance Education in the Asia-Pacific Region*. In late 2003, Senator Payne was part of a parliamentary delegation that visited the Solomon Islands to observe progress of RAMSI. Most recently, Senator Payne led an Australian delegation of 10 observers to monitor the Solomon Islands national election held on 5 April 2006.

The Committee will receive written submissions until **5 August 2006**, after which it will conduct a series of public hearings. Contributions are welcome from anyone with an interest in the issues raised by the terms of reference. Submissions from relevant organisations in the Pacific will be especially valuable.

For media comment, please contact the Committee Chair, Senator Marise Payne, on (02) 9893 5151 (electorate office).

For all other inquiries, please contact the Human Rights Sub-Committee Secretary by phone on (02) 6277 2313, or visit the Sub-Committee website at:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/pacificaid/index.htm>