



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Foreign Affairs Sub Committee

MEDIA ALERT
Issued: 3 November 2008

*Chair: Senator Michael Forshaw
Sub Comm. Chair: Michael Danby MP*

Business relations with ASEAN and human rights to be discussed at Sydney public hearing

Opportunities for Australian businesses in ASEAN will be one of the issues discussed when Federal Parliament's Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee resumes its inquiry into Australia's relationship with ASEAN on Thursday, 6 November in Sydney.

Announcing the public hearing, to be held in the SMC Conference and Function Centre, 66 Goulburn Street, Sydney, Sub-Committee Chairman Michael Danby said the committee had received evidence that trade in services to ASEAN needed to be boosted.

"The Australia-ASEAN Business Council has commented that the anticipated signing of the FTA with ASEAN should create a 'head-turning affect' and focus Australian business on the opportunities in ASEAN—collectively Australia's biggest trading partner," Mr Danby said.

Attention has been drawn to the foreign ownership rules imposed by ASEAN countries which limits long-term foreign ownership to 49 per cent.

"Telstra and Qantas have both invested in ASEAN, but Telstra sold its joint-venture interests in Vietnam and Indonesia whereas Qantas retains a significant interest in low-cost carriers in the ASEAN region. The committee will be keen to discuss with Telstra and Qantas the reasons for this apparent different business strategy and whether the new Australia-ASEAN FTA will affect their investment in the region."

Human rights issues will be also discussed with Indonesian Solidarity and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

"There are some 140 000 Burmese refugees along the Thai-Burmese border. The committee will examine suggestions as to how they might be assisted by the international community. The ASEAN Charter has provision for a human rights body and this might provide an opportunity to address abuses in Burma and abuses of migrant workers in ASEAN countries," Mr Danby said.

The hearing will commence with witnesses from the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation which has been cooperating with its ASEAN counterparts through the Regional Security Radioactive Sources Project.

"The effective control and storage of radioactive materials has environmental and international security implications. ANSTO has commented that many countries in South-east Asia require assistance to develop the expertise needed to embed security measures in legislation and to ensure radioactive materials remain secure," Mr Danby said.

The hearing is in **Lodge Room 2, SMC Conference and Function Centre**, 66 Goulburn Street, Sydney, and starts at 9.05am

9.05 am	Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation
9.40 am	Australian–ASEAN Business Council
10.20 am	Telstra Corporation Ltd
11.10 am	Singapore Airlines Ltd
11.50 am	Qantas Airways Ltd
1.50 pm	Indonesian Solidarity
2.30 pm	Professor Howard Dick, University of Melbourne
3.05 pm	SBS Television
3.50 pm	AusHeritage Ltd
4.25 pm	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney

Submissions to the inquiry and transcripts of the public hearings are available on the Committee's website.

For media inquiries, contact the Sub-Committee Chairman, Michael Danby MP on 03 9534 8126.

For all other inquiries, contact the Sub-Committee Secretary, John Carter, on 02 6277 4306 or visit the committee website at www.aph.gov.au/jfact