



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

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

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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia's relations with ASEAN

Parliament's Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee will conduct a new inquiry into Australia's relationship with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Representing a population of around 575 million, the ten ASEAN nations are an important trading partner for Australia, worth over \$55 billion in 2007.

ASEAN is the sixth most important export destination for Australian goods and services, and Australia is the eighth most important source of imports from ASEAN.

Announcing the new inquiry, Sub-Committee Chairman, Michael Danby MP said the committee would explore a range of issues, including economic opportunities and security.

"ASEAN has a forecasted combined gross domestic product of US\$1450 billion in 2008—a doubling since 2003. This provides a huge opportunity for Australian business.

"The countries of ASEAN are also of strategic importance to Australia being situated to the north of the country. Political stability in the region and good international relations are integral to Australia's security and prosperity," Mr Danby said.

"ASEAN is currently focusing on regional integration through 'ASEAN plus three' and the ASEAN Regional Forum. It is also looking to establish an ASEAN Economic Community. In addition the Australian Government has expressed support for the implementation of an ASEAN-Australia Comprehensive Partnership's Plan of Action," he said.

Along with exploring ways to improve Australia's involvement in ASEAN and opportunities to enhance the regional economy and security through Australian involvement, the committee will examine cultural links and the impact of global warming on the region.

This new inquiry follows previous inquiries into Australia's relationship with individual ASEAN countries: in 2004 with Indonesia; and in 2007 with Malaysia.

The Committee will receive written submissions until 22 August 2008, 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.

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

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