



Treaties Committee marks 10th Anniversary

The Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, Dr Andrew Southcott MP tabled *Report 78 Treaty Scrutiny: A Ten Year Review* today in Federal parliament. This report contains an account of the seminar held in March which marked the tenth anniversary of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.

The Committee was established in 1996 as part of a package of reforms intended to create a more transparent and democratic treaty making process. As a result of the 1996 Reforms, and in particular the establishment of the Treaties Committee, Parliament now plays an important role in examining all proposed treaty actions.

“The Treaties Committee has a dual role in providing for the Parliamentary scrutiny of treaties and in increasing the transparency of the treaty scrutiny process,” says Dr Southcott, “As part of its role in providing a more transparent treaty making process, the Committee also functions as a check that adequate consultation has taken place. After ten years of JSCOT it was fitting that a seminar be conducted to assess the 1996 reforms and to look more broadly at the role of the legislature in the treaty making process, both here and overseas.” he continued.

The Seminar heard addresses by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Alexander Downer MP, the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and International Security, Mr Kevin Rudd MP, Members of State and Federal parliament, Members of the New Zealand Parliament, distinguished international guests, including the former Chief of the United Nations Treaty Section, academics and public servants.

Report 78 provides a detailed summary and analysis of the issues discussed at the Seminar. Some of the issues which participants considered were: Has the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties made the treaty making process more democratic, transparent and accountable? How adequate is the consultation between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories in relation to treaties? How could it be more effective? Has the failure of the Treaties Council to meet more than once since 1996 had an impact on the treaty making process?

Report 78 is available on the Committee’s website:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/report.htm>

or by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

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