



Submission No 11

**Review of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Annual Report 2009 - 2010**

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Department of Foreign Affairs, and Trade -
Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Public Hearing
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Question No. 1

Topic: Passports Income

Question on Notice (Page 7 & 20)

Senator Macdonald

Can you give me on notice the details for the last relevant period on what income comes in in relation to passports, and what your actual costs are (what it costs to develop a passport)?

Answer

Passport fees revenue reported in the 2009-10 Financial Statements was \$324.331 million (2009-10 DFAT Annual Report, page 319). The Australian Passport (Application Fees) Act 2005 section 4 (5) defines passport fees as a tax and, as such, fees are set by government and not linked to production costs. Fees collected are deposited directly to Consolidated Revenue.

The total cost of producing the 1.774 million passports issued in 2009-10 was \$176.922 million (2009-10 DFAT Annual Report, page 222).

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Question No. 2

Topic: Staff resources in Africa

Question on Notice (Page 8)

Senator Macdonald & Moore

What are the figures for the number of staff (including AusAID) in Africa and what is the total A-based staff in Africa as a percentage of all A-based staff?

Answer

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

As at 30 June 2010, there were 31 A-based DFAT officers and 93 locally engaged DFAT employees in Africa. This figure represented 5.5% of the total number of DFAT A-based staff serving overseas at that time.

AusAID

At 30 June 2010, there were 6 A-based AusAID officers and 13 locally engaged AusAID employees in Africa. This represents 3.1% of the 194 AusAID A-based staff serving overseas at that time.

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Question No. 3

Topic: Food and Agriculture Organisation

Question on Notice (Page 9)

Senator Macdonald

What is the final list of contenders for the position of Secretary-General for the Food and Agriculture Organisation?

Answer

The election for the position of Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for the period 2012-2015 took place on 26 June 2011. Dr José Graziano da Silva was elected to the position.

At the time the question was asked there were six candidates for this position as follows:

Austria: Dr Franz Fischler, consultant (2005-2010); former EU Commissioner for Agriculture (1995-2004)

Brazil: Dr José Graziano da Silva, currently FAO Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean and FAO Assistant Director-General (since 2006), and former Brazilian Special Minister of State for Food Security (2003-04)

Indonesia: Prof Dr Indroyono Soesilo, current Secretary of the Coordinating Ministry for People's Welfare; former DG, Marine & Fisheries Research Agency (2000-08)

Iran: Dr Mohammed Saeid Noori Naeini, Iran's Ambassador to FAO, 1994-2005, and Chairman of FAO Council, 2005-09

Iraq: Dr Abdullatif Jamal Rashid, former Iraqi Minister of Water Resources (2003-2010)

Spain: Mr Miguel Angel Moratinos Cuyaubé, former Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs (2004-2010).

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Question No. 4

Topic: Language Proficiency

Question on Notice (Page 12)

Senator Trood

Provide the committee with a list of the department's overall language proficiencies in relation to the professional tests in each of the languages for which the department have people trained?

Answer

Current Tested Language Proficiency of DFAT Employees as at 31 March 2011
(definition of ratings included below).

	S2R2	S3R3	S4R4
Language	2011	2011	2011
Arabic	11	18	3
Bislama	2	6	3
Bengali	1	0	0
Burmese	2	1	0
Cantonese	2	2	2
Croatian	1	0	2
Danish	1	0	1
Dutch	0	1	3
Farsi	3	5	0
Filipino	2	2	2
French	53	65	69
German	27	26	24

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	S2R2	S3R3	S4R4
Language	2011	2011	2011
Greek	2	2	4
Hebrew	0	0	1
Hindi	2	1	2
Hungarian	1	2	1
Indonesian	27	57	22
Italian	2	19	14
Japanese	27	27	18
Khmer	4	1	1
Korean	3	10	3
Lao	1	3	3
Malay	2	10	3
Mandarin	23	38	37
S.I. Pidgin	2	9	5
Polish	4	3	5
Portuguese	5	15	10
Russian	1	13	11
Serbian	0	0	2
Spanish	33	37	28
Swedish	2	2	0
Tetum	0	3	1
Thai	7	14	6
Tok Pisin	4	17	13

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	S2R2	S3R3	S4R4
Language	2011	2011	2011
Turkish	1	4	1
Urdu	1	3	1
Vietnamese	4	11	4
Totals	263	427	305

DEFINITION OF DFAT LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY RATINGS

Speaking

S2 Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements in familiar subject areas.

S3 Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social and professional topics.

S4 Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs.

Reading and Translating

R2 Able to read, demonstrate comprehension of and/or translate into idiomatic English simple, authentic material on factual subjects within a familiar context, which is presented in a standard printed form, in predictable sequence.

R3 Can read, demonstrate comprehension of and/or translate into idiomatic English a variety of authentic prose material on unfamiliar subjects.

R4 Able to read fluently, demonstrate comprehension of and/or translate accurately into idiomatic English all styles and forms of the language pertinent to professional needs.

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Question No. 5

Topic: Human Rights Dialogues

Question on Notice (Page 13)

Ms Parke

Do you think there are ways that human rights dialogues with other countries could be improved?

Answer

In 2005, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) reviewed the effectiveness of Australia's human rights dialogues. At that time, the Department accepted the recommendations made by the JSCFADT with the exception of tabling an annual statement to Parliament on dialogue outcomes. The Department continues to be of the view that tabling would diminish the frankness of dialogues.

Following the 2005 JSCFADT review, the Department has increased parliamentary representation at dialogues; civil society involvement where possible; and transparency mechanisms.

Parliamentary involvement: The Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and members of the JSCFADT Human Rights Sub-committee are invited to participate in Australia's human rights dialogues. At the 2011 dialogue with Vietnam, for example, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Hon Laurie Ferguson, Chair, JSCFADT Human Rights Sub-committee were members of Australia's official delegation. In 2007, Senator Marise Payne and Senator Linda Kirk attended the 11th dialogue meeting with China. Ms Kerry Rea MP, then Chair, JSCFADT Human Rights Sub-Committee, and Senator Helen Kroger, representing the Opposition, attended the 12th China dialogue meeting in 2009. The third dialogue with Laos is due to be held in late 2011 and the Department will invite representation from the Chair and Vice-Chair of the JSCFADT Human Rights Sub-committee.

Civil society involvement: The Department seeks civil society involvement in and contribution to dialogues where possible. The extent of direct involvement by civil society organisations in official talks is subject to the agreement of the foreign governments concerned. Although NGOs did not participate in the official 2011 dialogue with Vietnam, the Department invited NGO submissions in advance of the dialogue. Two submissions were received. The Vietnamese delegation met separately with two NGO peak body representatives, AFHRO (Australian Forum of Human Rights Organisations) and ACFID (Australian Council for International

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Development), on the day of the dialogue. While Chinese authorities did not agree to the Department's request to include meetings with Australian NGOs as part of December 2010 dialogue activities, they arranged meetings between the Australian delegation and Chinese civil society organisations for the first time. The Department invited submissions from Australian NGOs in advance of the December meeting and received seven. As part of preparations for the 2009 dialogue meeting with Laos, the Department received and considered submissions from three NGOs. The dialogue, held in Vientiane, was followed by visits to relevant human rights projects.

Enhanced transparency and public accountability: The Department has enhanced public information available on the dialogues through press conferences and de-briefings for parliamentarians and civil society. In March 2011, for example, the Department provided a de-brief to the JSCFADT Human Rights Sub-Committee on the Vietnam and China dialogues. Following the 2010 China dialogue, a press conference was held in Beijing. Dialogue meetings are discussed as part of consultations between government officials and human rights NGOs during the year.

Technical assistance and capacity building: Australia's Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam both have associated Human Rights Technical Cooperation Programs delivered by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). The Department has also worked in partnership with the AHRC so that issues raised in the meetings with China and Vietnam are factored in to the AHRC's design and implementation of the technical cooperation programs it runs with those two countries.

In November 2010, AusAID commissioned a review of the Vietnam Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program. The review confirmed the program's overall effectiveness and emphasised the program's positive impact on the Vietnamese Government's capacity to implement international and domestic human rights commitments.

Australia's technical program with China was established in 1998 following the first Australia-China dialogue in 1997. The program has been reviewed three times. The 2011 review considered how the program could more effectively address human rights including more closely aligning the program to issues raised during dialogue meetings. AusAID is currently working with the AHRC and international human rights experts to re-design the program to ensure it remains relevant to the evolving human rights context in China.

The Department will contribute to the recently announced JSCFADT review of the effectiveness of Australia's human rights dialogues with China and Vietnam.

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Australia's human rights dialogues are part of a broader policy toolkit which the Government deploys at the multilateral, regional and bilateral levels to promote and protect human rights internationally. Other tools include active participation in human rights debate at United Nations forums, such as the UN General Assembly Third Committee and the Human Rights Council, support for the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions across the Asia-Pacific region, and bilateral representations on individual cases or issues.

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Question No. 6

Topic: Australia's conventions under International Law

Question on Notice (Page 14)

Senator Macdonald

What legislation exists, based on international law, that makes it illegal to send refugees to a country where they may be subject to torture?

Could you confirm that Malaysia is not a signatory to the convention against torture or the Covenant on Civic and Political Rights? Can you confirm that Nauru did actually sign these treaties in November 2001?

Answer

There is no such legislation in force in Australia. Questions on the operation of the *Migration Act 1958* and the intended operation of the *Migration Amendment (Complementary Protection) Bill 2011* should be directed to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Malaysia has not signed or ratified the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* or the *Convention against Torture or Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. Nauru signed the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *Convention against Torture or Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* on 12 November 2001. However, Nauru has not ratified either treaty.

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Question No. 7

Topic: Passport online applications

Question on Notice (Page 16)

Senator Moore

What aspects of the Passport online application process will be upgraded?

Answer

Currently 30% of clients complete the online application process. This number is growing annually by 3%.

The current online process involves completing a form online, after which the client prints the form and presents it at interview. We are looking at ways to improve this service by providing a streamlined application process that is tailored to the client's individual circumstances, reduces time and effort involved in applying for a passport and maintains the integrity of the identity information collected.