



Report by the Parliament's Treaties Committee

The Chair of the Parliament's Treaties Committee, Kelvin Thomson MP, today tabled the Committee's *Report 95*. The reports reviews 12 proposed treaty actions, including:

- the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- the Australia-Chile Free Trade Agreement
- the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- an agreement with the EU on transferring air carriers' passenger name record data to the Australian Customs Service
- agreements on Defence co-operation with France and the United Arab Emirates.

In each case the Committee has supported the proposed agreement and recommended that binding treaty action be taken. The Committee has made additional recommendations on the Australia-Chile Free Trade Agreement, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Agreement on Defence co-operation with the United Arab Emirates.

The Committee has recommended that the Government publish a review of the Australia-Chile Free Trade Agreement no later than two years after its commencement, to assess the ongoing relevance of concerns expressed about the Agreement, including suggestions that Australia's quarantine authorities may come under added pressure from prospective Chilean importers.

The Committee has also recommended that the Government, before commencing negotiations for any future trade agreement, should table in Parliament a document setting out its priorities and objectives. The document should include independent assessments of the costs and benefits.

Committee Chair Kelvin Thomson MP said "the Committee believes that such an arrangement would improve transparency in trade agreement negotiations, and address a number of concerns which were expressed by witnesses to this inquiry".

The Committee has also recommended that binding treaty action be taken on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention obliges governments to eliminate discrimination against the disabled in a range of areas. The Committee recommends:

- that the Government consider expanding the role of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commissioner, to enable the Commissioner to provide Parliament with an annual report on compliance with the Convention; and
- that a review be carried out of the relevant provisions of the Migration Act, and the administration of migration policy, to ensure that there is no discrimination against persons with disabilities in breach of the Convention.

In relation to the Treaty on Defence Co-operation between Australia and the United Arab Emirates, the Committee recommends that in any specific arrangements for the exchange of Defence personnel, the Government seek to ensure that Australian personnel are protected from corporal or capital punishment for offences committed under UAE law.

The Committee has also supported Australia's accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. As a Party to the Optional Protocol, Australia will recognise the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to consider complaints about alleged violations of Australia's obligations under the Convention.

Report 95 is available on the Committee's website:
www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/reports.htm or by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

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