
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Australia's response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

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Chair's Foreword

Australia has been the largest per capita country contributor to tsunami aid and played a major role in the relief and reconstruction effort, particularly in Indonesia, where the Boxing Day tsunami struck hardest.

It was against the backdrop of this generosity, and the fact that some 18 months have now elapsed since the disaster, that the Committee considered it timely to convene a forum where members could discuss with representatives of the Australian aid community where Australians' money is being spent and how aid agencies are continuing to deliver assistance to tsunami-affected communities.

Subsequently, the Committee hosted a public roundtable hearing at Parliament House on 12 May 2006, to which it invited a range of NGO representatives and government officials. At the roundtable, the Committee gained an overview of the progress to date, learnt about current operational priorities, and focused on emerging lessons that should inform ongoing responses to recovery requirements in the tsunami affected countries.

Witnesses outlined some of the reasons why the rebuilding process is progressing slowly. Ultimately, the sheer scale and complexity of the disaster must be borne in mind as the rebuilding phase progresses. It is also important that sufficient time be taken to consult with local communities and deliver high quality outcomes to beneficiaries. There are challenges with the supply of materials and labour and in some instances, the management of corruption issues. However, significant work has been done.

At the hearing, agencies described a wide range of projects which they are working on to achieve this end, from rebuilding houses, reinstalling basic services and restoring infrastructure, to health and counselling services, and training villagers to help with the planning of village reconstruction and direct access assistance.

The Committee would like to see greater coverage – including more positive stories – of the reconstruction effort as it progresses. While the tsunami is no longer “front page news” it remains the largest international relief and

reconstruction effort staged in recent times and one to which Australia continues to contribute significant resources.

In an era when the frequency of natural disasters appears to be increasing and the aid community finds itself being stretched to capacity, the Committee acknowledges that agencies are working at finding new ways to complement each others strengths, from engaging in joint reporting processes and civil-military cooperation to formal and informal evaluation processes.

The Committee hopes that this roundtable process contributes to and encourages public debate on this still important topic, and showcases some of the good work being done by Australian agencies.

Senator M A Payne
Chair
Human Rights Sub-Committee



Membership of the Committee

Chair Senator A B Ferguson

Deputy Chair Hon G J Edwards, MP

| | | |
|---------|--|---|
| Members | Senator A Bartlett (<i>from 9 December 2005</i>) | Mrs J Gash, MP |
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| Mr M Danby, MP | |
| Mrs T Draper, MP | |



Terms of reference

Pursuant to Paragraph 1 of its resolution of appointment, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade is empowered to consider and report on the annual reports of government agencies, in accordance with a schedule presented by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

On 9 February 2006, the Human Rights Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade resolved to examine the 2004-2005 annual reports of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Agency for International Development, focusing specifically on Australia's response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami.



List of abbreviations

| | |
|-----------|--|
| ACFID | Australian Council for International Development |
| ADF | Australian Defence Force |
| AFP | Australian Federal Police |
| AIPRD | Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development |
| AusAID | Australian Agency for International Development |
| BRR | Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency |
| Committee | Human Rights Sub-Committee |
| DFAT | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| DVI | Disaster Victim Identification |
| IDRL | International Disaster Response Laws |
| JSCFADT | Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade |
| MSF | Medicins Sans Frontieres |
| NGOs | Non-governmental organisations |
| PM & C | Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet |
| TAFREN | Taskforce for Rebuilding the Nation |
| UN | United Nations |

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|-------|---|
| UNDAC | United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |