

Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand

Introduction

- 2.1 The *Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand* (the Agreement) was signed in July 2004 and was negotiated in conjunction with the Australia-Thailand Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA). The Agreement is designed to strengthen non-trade ties between Australia and Thailand, such as political, diplomatic, security and social ties.

Overview

- 2.2 The Agreement is intended to increase cooperation between Australia and Thailand in numerous non-trade areas, through greater levels of information exchange and intensification of existing dialogue.¹ This enhancement was exemplified by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which stated that the Agreement will
- serve as a mechanism ... to deepen understanding and practical cooperation. It will also help us – and this is

1 National Interest Analysis (NIA), para. 7.

important for us – to get access more directly to many areas of Thai government with which we have had some but not a great deal of cooperation in the past. That we see as being one of the key opportunities presented by this agreement.²

2.3 The Agreement provides for high-level Ministerial consultation between Australia and Thailand. Through this consultation Australia can expect easier access to numerous areas of the Thai Government including:

- security
- law enforcement
- economic investment
- technical areas not covered by TAFTA
- environment and heritage
- natural resource management in agriculture
- science and technology in energy
- information technology and telecommunications
- civil aviation
- public administration
- immigration
- education
- culture
- social development
- tourism.

2.4 To facilitate this enhanced information exchange and cooperation, the Agreement contains provisions for the establishment of a Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation. This Commission would meet on a bi-annual basis, at Ministerial level, to review progress on cooperative activities identified in the Agreement. The Commission would also continue to strengthen ties between Australia and Thailand by identifying further areas for potential cooperation between the two nations.³

Implementation and costs

2.5 The implementation of the Agreement requires no legislative action by Australia. All aspects of implementation are to be addressed administratively by relevant agencies and organisations. There will be

2 Ms Kathy Klugman, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 March 2005, p. 41.

3 NIA, para. 13.

no additional costs incurred by Australia through the entry into force of the Agreement.⁴

Withdrawal or denunciation

- 2.6 The Agreement can be terminated by either Australia or Thailand on six months notice by written notification to the other Party.

Conclusion and recommendation

- 2.7 The Agreement will forge closer strategic and diplomatic ties with one of Australia's important regional neighbours. The Committee notes that in the current strategic environment it is in Australia's best interests to make every effort to enhance regional ties in both trade and non-trade matters, such as those incorporated in the Agreement.

Recommendation 1

The Committee supports the *Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand (Canberra, 5 July 2004)*, and recommends that binding treaty action be taken.

4 NIA, paras. 15-17

