

Introduction

Brief overview of the New Zealand Parliamentary Committee Exchange Program

- 1.1 Since 1989, the Australia-New Zealand Parliamentary Committee Exchange Program (PCEP) has provided a forum for discussion on topical issues for Australian and New Zealand Parliamentary committees. The program has also provided opportunities to strengthen the broader relationship between the two countries at the parliamentary level.
- 1.2 PCEP is a parliamentary exchange program, offered annually to Senate, House and joint committees on a rotational basis on application. The program operates through a reciprocal arrangement between the Australian and New Zealand Parliaments, where both parliaments host a visiting committee.
- 1.3 In 2009, for the first time since PCEP commenced, the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories (the committee) was selected to participate in the program as a delegation of the Australian Parliament.

Role of the committee

- 1.4 The committee was established by resolution of the Parliament on 13 February 2008. The committee's resolution of appointment empowers the committee to inquire into and report on: works within the

Parliamentary Zone, amendments to the National Capital Plan (the principle planning document for Canberra as the National Capital) and any matters relating to Australia's external territories.

- 1.5 Australia's external territories are: the Australian Antarctic Territory, Heard Island and McDonald Islands, Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Norfolk Island, the Coral Sea Islands, and Ashmore and Cartier Islands.
- 1.6 In addition, the committee may inquire into the annual reports of relevant Government departments and authorities as tabled in the Parliament.

Visit objectives

- 1.7 During the time of the committee's visit to New Zealand, the inquiry into the changing economic environment in the Indian Ocean Territories (IOTs) was underway and the committee was interested in discussing the economic issues facing New Zealand's external territories.
- 1.8 The New Zealand Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's (FADT) Inquiry into New Zealand's relationship with South Pacific countries offered an opportunity for the committee to discuss the issues arising from assisting with economic development.
- 1.9 The committee was particularly interested in discussing the FADT committee's interim inquiry findings as similar issues were expected to be encountered in regard to the IOTs inquiry.
- 1.10 New Zealand has responsibility for two external territories: Tokelau in the South Pacific and the Ross Dependency in Antarctica and so, the visit also offered opportunities for the committee to discuss and compare current funding and service delivery arrangements for external territories.
- 1.11 The committee was also fortunate to be briefed on the town and city planning policies applied to Wellington.
- 1.12 In addition, the delegation was provided with the opportunity to discuss New Zealand's progress with the operation of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Program.
- 1.13 A summary of the committee's visit objectives is included in the front of this report.

Program of meetings and inspections

- 1.14 The delegation's program of meetings and inspections provided an opportunity to meet with members of the FADT committee, departmental and ministry officers. These meetings enabled the delegation to examine and gain a greater understanding of the administrative and funding arrangements applied to New Zealand's: external territories, Antarctic research and support programs, capital city town planning principles, and the seasonal guest workers program.
- 1.15 The visit program also provided the committee with the opportunity to discuss Australia's experience in administering its external territories, elements of the Australian Antarctic program and planning principles applied to Australia's national capital.
- 1.16 The delegation commenced its program of meetings in Christchurch where it met with officials from Antarctica New Zealand to discuss New Zealand's Antarctic funding and research contribution. Following these meetings, the delegation inspected the Antarctic Visitor's Centre where it was able to gain a greater appreciation of New Zealand's history with Antarctica and the training required to live and work in Antarctica.
- 1.17 The second part of the visit program was undertaken in Wellington, where the delegation was welcomed by the Hon Dr Lockwood Smith MP, Speaker of the Parliament of New Zealand.
- 1.18 Further, in renewing existing parliamentary trans-Tasman ties, the delegation was pleased to meet with the Hon Murray McCully MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Hon Chris Carter MP, Opposition Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Mr John Hayes MP, Chair of the FADT Committee and committee members, Ms Rahui Katene MP, Member for Te Tai Tonga, Maori Party, the Hon Mita Ririnui MP, Chair and members of the New Zealand-Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group.
- 1.19 The delegation is grateful to the Speaker of the New Zealand Parliament, the Hon Dr Lockwood Smith MP, for his support of the activities of the delegation and his generous hospitality during the visit.
- 1.20 The official visit program can be found at Appendix A.

Figure 1.1 Delegation members in front of the New Zealand Parliament Building in Wellington



Structure of the report

- 1.21 Chapter 2 outlines the issues facing New Zealand's external territories, provides a brief discussion about the New Zealand FADT committee's inquiry into New Zealand's relationship with South Pacific countries, and New Zealand's funding and research contribution to Antarctica.
- 1.22 Chapter 3 provides background to the planning principles applied to Wellington and New Zealand's experience with its seasonal guest worker program.