



Submission No 21

**Review of Australia's Relationship with the  
Countries of Africa**

**Name:** Mr Haileluel Gebre-selassie

**Organisation:** Private Submission

Submission No:.....21.....  
Date Received: .....14/12/09.....  
Secretary: .....

11 December 2009  
Mr Haileluel Gebre-selassie



Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Email: [jscfadt@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscfadt@aph.gov.au)  
Canberra, ACT

Dear The Standing Committee,

**RE: AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COUNTRIES OF AFRICA**

I read with great interest about your request in October 2009 to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade regarding Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa. As a migrant from Ethiopia myself with a long history of community engagement and representation through the African Think Tank (ATT) and Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV), I believe there are many potential opportunities to foster a stronger relationship between Australia and the African countries.

In early 2009 I was awarded a Churchill Fellowship which allowed me to travel to several countries around the world and investigate and document various integration strategies of migrants and refugees as part of. I have enclosed a copy of the resulting report for your interest.

In the course of this research, I gained some valuable first-hand impressions and insights into how Australia's relationship with African countries can be expanded and enhanced, particularly through the proactive engagement with African Australians. A brief concept paper has already been circulated to a number of key stakeholder areas including higher institutions, Australian-based international aid agencies, peak bodies, politicians, African Australians and settlement sectors proposing various "Africalink" activities such as:

- sports
- arts
- music
- leadership training
- business
- education on specific areas such as peace education

Preliminary feedback is very encouraging and I anticipate that the full detail will be circulated in the near future.

In the meantime, I have summarised these suggestions in the following submission to the Joint Standing Committee. If you would like to discuss any of the recommendations, please feel free to contact me on m) 0429 009 912 or email: [addis100@hotmail.com](mailto:addis100@hotmail.com).

Yours faithfully

Haileluel Gebre-selassie, BA, MPPM, MISW  
*Winston Churchill Fellow*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade regarding Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa.

**Background on the Australia / Africa relationship**

1. Many Australian owned companies operate in several countries all over the African continent.
2. Hundreds of Australian students and tourists travel each year to work and / or visit the African continent.
3. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 248,699 Africa-born people were resident in Australia at the time of the 2006 census.
4. Australia's engagement with the continent through business has been increasing over the years. The mining-boom as well as the expansion of many other Australian owns businesses in Africa are some of the fastest growing trends.
5. Traditionally Australia has links with a limited number of countries in Africa mainly in Southern Africa and also with the former British colonies.
6. In recent years, the Australian government has undertaken a number of high level delegations to Africa, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Australian Governor General, and Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance.

**African-Australian engagement locally and overseas**

7. Despite being one of the newest migrant communities to resettle in Australia, Africans are actively working with various leading local and international agencies to build the capacity of their leadership.
8. African-Australians have also raised and donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to their respective original countries though different government, welfare and international aid organisations. For example, the Australian-Ethiopian community donated over \$25,000 to the Fistula Foundation of Australian, Dr Catherine Hamlin, which has cured thousands of young Ethiopian women suffering from the fistula problem. Similarly, the African-Australian communities donated funds though Care Australia to address health related issues in the Afar region.
9. The remittance flowing from African-Australians to Africa to support their extended relatives has also assisted in opening businesses. Worth millions of dollars, this activity continues to grow both the business and individual relationships and the cultural ties between the two continents.

**International African-Australian delegations**

10. In January 2010, a delegation of African-Australians will be dispatched to Africa for a three weeks mission through the active support of Act For Peace (National Council of Churches in Australia). The delegation is considered a pilot project to engage African-Australians in peace-education activities in Africa and to foster strong links between the two continents.

11. Upon return the delegates will engage the African-Australian communities to increase their engagement with Africa. The delegates will also submit their report to the Australian government to seek ongoing support in engaging with Africa through various means including peace education, sports, arts, music, training in leadership skills and capacity building, foreign aid and development.
12. The delegates will also establish strong links with the African countries' representatives based in Africa; creating a working relationship with for example, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union's various departments.
13. The report of this feasibility study including the outcomes of the mission will be available in March 2010.

**Harnessing the unique knowledge of African Australians**

14. The African Australian delegate offers a useful model for engagement between Africa and Australia. While the Rudd government's rigorous efforts to engage with Africa are to be commended, there is definite potential for greater involvement by African-Australians in the initiatives.
15. By actively engaging with African-Australians through the "Africanlink" who have valuable links and access to their respective countries, the Australia government can do much to foster stronger cultural and business ties between Australia and African countries.