



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee

Chair: Mr Michael Danby MP
Sub-Committee Chair: Mr Nick
Champion MP

MEDIA RELEASE

15 March 2012

Overseas representation inquiry: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to reappear

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will discuss how Australia's diplomatic presence can better meet the country's needs when it reappears before Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade committee on Monday 19 March.

Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee chair Mr Nick Champion MP said the committee will discuss a number of issues which have arisen during its inquiry into Australia's overseas representation with department secretary Mr Dennis Richardson.

"A general theme throughout the inquiry is that Australia's diplomatic footprint does not meet Australia's needs in the 21st century," Mr Champion said. "There have been a number of suggestions as to where new diplomatic posts should be opened, but few suggestions where posts should be closed.

"At issue is how, in times of budgetary constraint, such demands can be met and whether there should be a radical rethink of where Australia should be represented and whether the traditional embassy meets the demands of a modern high technology world.

"The committee has sought additional information from DFAT on its staffing numbers, separation rates and language skills," Mr Champion said. "Such factors influence the corporate knowledge of the Department and its ability to adequately represent Australia abroad."

DFAT's use of information and communications technology has also been raised in evidence.

"The Lowy Institute has criticised DFAT's media guidelines as being too restrictive and recommends they be reviewed. It has also commented on the quality of DFAT's websites. The hearing will allow DFAT to respond to these and other criticisms and comments."

The public hearing in **Committee Room 1R3** Parliament House in Canberra will be webcast live on: http://www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Watch_Parliament

Program

Canberra—Monday, 19 March 2012—Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House

5.40 pm Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Details of public hearings and submissions to the inquiry are available at the inquiry website [here](#).

For media inquiries contact the Sub-Committee Chair, Mr Nick Champion MP on (02) 6277 4451; Mobile: 0488 556 036.

For all other inquiries contact the Inquiry Secretary, John Carter, on (02) 6277 2313 or visit the Committee website.