

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Outcome 1.1

Question No. 23

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 31 October 2005:

Optional protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children:

- (a) are there other texts being negotiated with other countries besides that with Lebanon?
- (b) have other countries contacted Australia to consider whether or not it would be in their interests to adopt a similar agreement?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

(a) The Attorney-General's Department, in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is seeking to establish an 'Agreement Between Australia and the Republic of Lebanon Regarding Cooperation on Protecting the Welfare of Children'. The draft agreement is facilitative and administrative in nature. The agreement would provide a structured mechanism for the discussion between Lebanese and Australian Government officials of cases involving children abducted by a parent, either to Australia from Lebanon or vice-versa. A similar agreement exists between Australia and Egypt. Currently, no other similar texts are being negotiated.

(b) The Attorney-General's Department is aware that other countries have recently expressed an interest in considering similar bilateral arrangements with Australia. This is currently a matter for Government consideration and discussions are currently underway between officers of the Attorney-General's Department and other Commonwealth agencies.