

## Introduction

### Referral of the inquiry

- 1.1 The International Fund for Agricultural Development Amendment Bill 2012 (the Bill) was referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade for inquiry and report on 13 September 2012 by the House of Representatives Selection Committee.
- 1.2 The Selection Committee's report stated the following reason for referral/principal issues for consideration:

Determine whether the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has fully addressed the concerns that were raised by the former Howard Government, and which prompted Australia to withdraw from the organisation in 2004.

Consideration of the additional financial and human resources required by AusAID to support Australia's engagement with IFAD.<sup>1</sup>

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1 House of Representatives Selection Committee, *Report No. 65*, 13 September 2012, p. 3.

## Related Parliamentary inquiries

- 1.3 This inquiry is the second recent Parliamentary committee inquiry into the proposed legislation.
- 1.4 The previous inquiry was conducted by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCT) which considered whether Australia should resume engagement with IFAD when it reviewed the *Agreement Establishing the International Fund for Agricultural Development (Rome, 13 June 1976)*. The JSCT is empowered to inquire into any treaty to which Australia has become signatory when the treaty is tabled in Parliament – the treaty was tabled on 26 June 2012.
- 1.5 The JSCT subsequently conducted a public hearing in Canberra on 13 August 2012, during which it examined witnesses from AusAID.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.6 In its report, tabled on 10 September 2012, the JSCT recommended that it:  
... support[ed] the Agreement Establishing the International Fund for Agricultural Development (Rome, 13 June 1976) and recommend[ed] that binding treaty action be taken.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.7 The report of the JSCT was an unanimous report.

## Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.8 This inquiry was conducted by the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (the Committee). The Committee resolved, in light of the previous inquiry by the JSCT, that it would adopt as its terms of reference the principal issues for consideration detailed in the Selection Committee's report (see paragraph 1.2).
- 1.9 Individuals and organisations were invited to prepare submissions and a media release was issued on 20 September 2012. The inquiry was also included in the monthly House of Representatives advertisement in the *Australian* on 3 October 2012. Details of the inquiry were made available on the Committee's website.
- 1.10 The Committee received six submissions to the inquiry which are listed at Appendix A.

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2 JSCT, *Report 129: Review into Treaties tabled on 19 and 26 June 2012*, p. 2.

3 JSCT, *Report 129: Review into Treaties tabled on 19 and 26 June 2012*, Recommendation 4, p. 34.

- 1.11 A public hearing was conducted on Thursday, 25 October 2012 in Canberra. Representatives from AusAID appeared on behalf of the Foreign Affairs and Trade Portfolio agencies (FATP) which had provided a submission.<sup>4</sup> Appendix B lists the witnesses that appeared.

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4 The agencies providing the submission were AusAID, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research.

