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**Australian Government Response to the Report of the
Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade:**

***Australia's Public Diplomacy:
Building our Image***

January 2009

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This is the Australian Government's response to the report of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Australia's public diplomacy, *Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building our Image*, as tabled on 16 August 2007.

The government welcomes the committee's commendation of the work of Australian government departments and agencies, cultural and educational institutions and private organisations actively engaged in promoting Australia's reputation overseas. The committee's report highlighted the intense competition that Australia faces from other countries also seeking to be heard on matters of importance to them.

The attached response to the committee's recommendations reflects the government's commitment to continue to pursue Australia's public diplomacy programs designed to positively influence the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of people overseas on Australia's identity, values and ideas in a way that directly serves the advancement of Australia's foreign and trade policy interests.

Australian Government response to *Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building our Image*

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 1 The committee recommends that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) give a higher priority to tracking opinions of Australia in countries of greatest significance to Australia as a means of obtaining better insights into the attitudes of others toward Australia. To this end, DFAT should devote appropriate resources to develop a capacity to conduct and evaluate regular assessments of attitudes towards Australia and its foreign policy.	Noted.	DFAT will continue to closely track overseas opinions of Australia to inform the development and implementation of public diplomacy strategies and activities. DFAT posts report any significant media coverage of contentious or breaking issues, particularly those that may require a media response strategy. The government acknowledges the role of opinion surveys in helping to shape public diplomacy strategies. DFAT commissions targeted research and opinion surveys in key countries and regions on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate and as resources allow. DFAT will continue to commission opinion surveys, as necessary and often with other agencies, to evaluate overseas attitudes to Australia. DFAT and other agencies subscribe jointly to the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index, a unique survey assessing attitudes in 20 countries towards 50 countries, including Australia, on a wide range of issues from exports, investment, education and science to immigration, governance and culture. Members of the Interdepartmental Committee on Public Diplomacy share the results of relevant opinion surveys on attitudes towards Australia in priority countries. It is widely recognised that national reputations must be earned; they cannot simply be constructed. Image change is an incremental process that usually occurs, not in months or years, but over decades.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 2 The committee recommends that the government's public diplomacy policy attach greater importance to creating an awareness of public diplomacy domestically. It recommends that the government formulate a public communication strategy and put in place explicit programs designed: • to inform more Australians about Australia's public diplomacy; and • to encourage and facilitate the many and varied organisations and groups involved in international activities to take a constructive role in actively supporting Australia's public diplomacy objectives.	Noted.	Issues-based public advocacy, including on trade, counter-terrorism, arms control, the environment, migration, international development, agriculture and human rights, is vigorously pursued domestically and internationally. Government departments' communications units proactively explain foreign and trade policy objectives to domestic audiences as well as promoting informed and positive international media coverage and countering inaccurate information. Public diplomacy products are used to reach out to domestic as well as international audiences. For example, the Australia Now Factsheets series on the DFAT website registers a total of almost 26,000 pageviews in an average week: approximately 35 percent of these relate to Australian domains and 65 percent to international domains. Officials regularly participate in domestic conferences, seminars and consultations to advocate Australia's strategies and policies on a range of foreign and trade policy issues with academics, NGOs, media and business. The government supports a range of domestic organisations involved in creating awareness of Australia's international activities, including through DFAT's financial support to the Australia Institute of International Affairs which aims to raise the level of understanding of the role of foreign and trade policy in Australia and to provide a forum for debate on Australia's place in the world.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 3 The committee recommends that the government take a more active role in working with Australian educational institutions to develop stronger and more effective alumni programs for overseas students who have studied in Australia.	Noted.	The Endeavour Awards program offers educational, research and professional development Awards to citizens of the Asia-Pacific, Middle East, Europe and the Americas. The Awards aim to build enduring links at the individual, organisational and country levels. The establishment of the Endeavour Awards Alumni Network is an important component of the Endeavour Awards program. The Endeavour Awards Alumni Network will promote bilateral and multilateral engagement between Australia and participating countries through the ongoing interaction of Endeavour Alumni, their host organisations in Australia and the government. The Network will also be a valuable tool in measuring the long-term impact and success of the Endeavour Awards. Australian diplomatic missions abroad recognise the contribution that alumni can make to our public diplomacy efforts and are working with them to project a positive image of Australia. Similarly, missions draw upon the network of Australian studies programs in their countries of accreditation and look to those involved in these programs for support with the mission's public diplomacy events and activities.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 4 The committee recommends that: • all visitors' or training programs sponsored or funded by the government have clearly identified public diplomacy objectives; • DFAT ensure that all government sponsored or funded visitors' or training programs adopt a longer-term perspective and include measures or plans that are intended to consolidate and build on the immediate public diplomacy benefits that accrue from such activities; and • as an accountability measure, the organisers or sponsors of a visitors' or training program report on how the program has contributed to Australia's public diplomacy.	Noted.	All DFAT-funded visits programs have clearly identified public diplomacy objectives, consistent with the government's trade and foreign policy priorities. They also require the results of the visit to be reported on against these objectives, outlining outcomes. Performance indicators include: • the specific messages that the event conveyed; • how the event was used as a platform to promote broader aspects of contemporary Australia or Australian policies; • the number, level and influence of special guests attending; • the extent of the media coverage generated; • positive feedback from audiences/stakeholders; • levels of awareness achieved for the image being promoted; • feedback from touring groups on the level of support provided; • analysis of media coverage generated and the extent to which it reflects DFAT's messages; • the extent to which perceptions have been changed or moderated in Australia's favour; and • feedback from the target audience on the success of the advocacy efforts. The Interdepartmental Committee on Public Diplomacy will continue to underline to all government departments and agencies the importance of incorporating public diplomacy objectives, consistent with the government's medium to long-term international priorities, into their visitors' and/or training programs.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 5 Consistent with the findings of previous parliamentary reports, the committee recommends that the government consider introducing additional incentives for Australian students not only to study an Asian language but to combine their studies with cultural studies.	Noted.	The Australian Government places great value on Australia's relationships with its Asian neighbours and recognises that one of the most important ways to strengthen these relationships is to provide the best opportunities for young Australians to become familiar with the languages and cultures of these neighbours, including China, Japan, Korea and Indonesia. Three of the top six languages studied at Year 12 level are now Asian languages, with Japanese and Chinese the most studied languages. The government is implementing the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP), which will commence in January 2009. Program funding of \$62.4 million over 2008-09 to 2010-11 will provide additional Asian language classes in high schools; teacher training and support; and the development of specialist curriculum for students who display advanced abilities in Asian languages and studies programs. In addition to NALSSP, the government is providing \$112 million funding through the School Languages Program (2005-2008) to support languages education generally, including Asian languages. The government also provides funding support to the Asian Education Foundation (\$6.279 million from 2008-09 to 2011-12) to promote and support the embedding of the studies of Asia in the curriculum. The Australian Government provides \$2 million per annum for the Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships Programme, which provides opportunities for intensive language and cultural study for practising teachers and trainee teachers, including teachers of Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		At the post-secondary level, the Australian Government is providing \$789,000 to the Australian Council of the Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities to undertake a study of innovative approaches to the provision of languages other than English through trialling selected collaborative models over 2006-2008. Funding of \$369,006 is also being provided to enable a consortium of four universities (the University of New England, the University of the Sunshine Coast, the University of Tasmania and Charles Darwin University) to pool Indonesian teaching and curriculum development resources; to undertake collaborative provision of Indonesian at the four core institutions; to offer “blended model” delivery at other regional universities; and to run a short in-country program at Universitas Mataram, Nusa Tenggara Barat. Many of the bilateral foundations, councils and institutes offer a range of programs and support to encourage Australians to improve their foreign language skills and their awareness of other cultures. For example, the Australia-China Council (ACC) is a sponsor of the <i>National Chinese Speech (Hanyuqiao) Competition</i> for Years 10 and 11 Chinese language students. The ACC is also funding a national forum on Chinese language pedagogy in Australian schools in late October 2008 and part-funding a Chinese language curriculum project with the Australian National University's China Institute. The Australia-Indonesia Institute funds an Australia-Indonesia Youth Exchange Program; partnered with the Myer Foundation and AusAID to fund a major program of school e-twinning and teacher training (2008-11); and funds a Schools Exchange Small Grants Program which enables Australian schools to arrange a placement for an Indonesian teacher.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 6 The committee recommends that the government restructure the interdepartmental committee on public diplomacy (IDC) so that its functions extend beyond sharing information between departments and agencies to include coordinating and monitoring Australia's public diplomacy activities. It recommends: (a) more senior representation on the IDC than is currently the case - Departments should be represented at the Deputy Secretary level; (b) expanding the functions of the IDC to ensure that it has a central role in planning and overseeing a whole-of-government long-term strategic plan for Australia's public diplomacy; (c) the IDC have responsibility for ensuring that the synergies among government departments and agencies are identified and exploited in pursuit of the government's foreign policy objectives; (d) the IDC produce a coherent public diplomacy strategy that outlines priority objectives for public diplomacy along the lines of the UK Public Diplomacy Board; (e) the government's public diplomacy strategic framework acknowledge the potential of local governments, particularly the major city councils, to engage in Australia's public diplomacy; (f) the government's strategic framework take account of non-state stakeholders and adopt as one of its key operating principles in its public diplomacy strategy "work with others, including business, NGOs and Australian expatriates"; (g) some cross membership on the IDC and the Australia International Cultural Council; (h) the IDC produce a report on discussions and decisions taken at its meetings to be published on its website; (i) establishing a sub-committee of the IDC with responsibility for ensuring that non-state organisations involved in international activities, including diaspora communities, are incorporated into an overarching public diplomacy framework; (j) establishing a sub-committee of the IDC that would be responsible for ensuring that Australia's public diplomacy stays at the forefront of developments in technology.	Noted.	The government will continue to ensure the appropriate level of involvement required for the effectiveness of the Interdepartmental Committee on Public Diplomacy (IDC on PD), noting that the appropriate level of involvement will depend on the issues to be discussed and the decisions to be taken. The IDC will continue to take a strategic, coherent approach and will look at engaging other non-government entities and other levels of government. As the global environment changes and Australia's public diplomacy objectives shift in response, we expect that the composition and role of the IDC will similarly evolve. DFAT, the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and Austrade are already members of both the IDC on PD and the Australia International Cultural Council (AICC).

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 7 The committee recommends that if, after considering the above recommendation, the government is of the view that the IDC cannot or should not be the body to take on this leadership and whole-of-government coordinating and advisory function, the government establish an appropriate separate and permanent body that would do so.	Noted.	The government will continue to review closely the role and effectiveness of the IDC.
Recommendation 8 The committee recommends that the Australian Government explore opportunities for greater and more effective collaboration and coordination with Australian capital city councils in promoting Australia's public diplomacy.	Accepted.	DFAT has written to capital city councils to draw their attention to the Committee's report; to identify the Images of Australia Branch as a point of contact for overseas public diplomacy initiatives; and to invite them to explore opportunities for further collaboration. The government currently collaborates with capital city councils in promoting Australia overseas on a case-by-case basis. By working together, we are able to ensure that Australia delivers consistent and well conceived messages to achieve mutually beneficial results overseas. For example, the Australian Embassy in Rome supported the City of Melbourne's <i>Melbourne in Milan Week</i> in 2007. DFAT supported the visit to Melbourne by three Milan journalists to help publicise the event and supported the European tour of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, which included a performance as part of <i>Melbourne in Milan Week</i>.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 9 The committee recommends that the Australia International Cultural Council (AICC) take note of the evidence relating to the coordination and planning of international cultural activities with a view to addressing the concerns raised in evidence. Close consultation with the relevant sections in the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, DFAT and Australia's cultural institutions would be central to AICC's consideration. The committee suggests that a report of the Council's deliberations and decisions be made available to the committee and also made public by publishing them on DFAT's and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts' websites (also see recommendation 6).	Noted.	DFAT, the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) and their portfolio organisations, work closely with Australian cultural institutions through the AICC and will continue to do so. DFAT, DEWHA, the Australia Council and a representative of a major cultural institution serve on the committee which assesses AICC grant applications. DFAT has established a distinct website for the AICC where information concerning the Council and its decisions will be published.
Recommendation 10 The committee recommends further that the government consider that the AICC be co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Arts and Sport. The committee suggests that this would contribute significantly to greater coordination and cooperation in the area of cultural diplomacy.	Accepted.	The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts will co-chair the AICC.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 11 The committee recommends that the government establish a small but specifically tasked cultural and public diplomacy unit in the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. In liaison with DFAT, the unit would provide the necessary institutional framework, to ensure that Australia's cultural institutions are well placed and encouraged to take full advantage of opportunities to contribute to Australia's public diplomacy.	Not supported.	The government does not consider it necessary at this stage for the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) to establish a separate cultural and public diplomacy unit because of the potential for duplication of role and function with existing Australia International Cultural Council support structures within DFAT. DEWHA will continue to maintain its current good working relationships with DFAT, the cultural sector and arts portfolio agencies in relation to cultural diplomacy activities.
Recommendation 12 The committee recommends that DFAT ensure that its public diplomacy framework accommodates the concerns of the educational institutions especially with regard to industry engagement by formulating with the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and the Vice Chancellors of Australian Universities appropriate strategies to facilitate a more productive engagement by these institutions in Australia's public diplomacy.	Noted.	The government notes the role played by educational institutions in promoting Australia abroad. DFAT is exploring possible strategies with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and Universities Australia (formerly the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee) to further engage these institutions. DEEWR will continue to work with the Business, Industry, and Higher Education Collaboration Council (BIHECC) to increase collaboration between the higher education sector and other public and private business, industry, community and educational organisations.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 13 The committee also recommends that DFAT initiate and sponsor a public debate on measures that could be taken to promote a more productive partnership between government departments and educational institutions in promoting Australia's public diplomacy.	Noted.	The government notes DEEWR's Australian Education International (AEI) currently liaises with all sectors of the education and training industry and all levels of government to develop and implement targeted promotional and communication strategies to profile Australian education, science and training internationally. As well, AEI works with Australian and locally-engaged staff around the world to increase their understanding of the role of education and to build collaboration between agencies on public diplomacy matters.
Recommendation 14 The committee recommends that DFAT review the findings of the Lowy report, <i>Diaspora</i>, reconsider the relevant recommendations made in March 2005 by the Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee on Australian Expatriates and consider the evidence set out in this report with regard to Australian expatriates and Australia's public diplomacy. The committee urges DFAT to formulate and implement strategies that would enable DFAT to take advantage of the significant resource of the diaspora and encourage Australian expatriates to engage more constructively in Australia's public diplomacy.	Noted.	DFAT acknowledges the significant contribution of expatriates in promoting Australian economic, social and cultural interests abroad. Australian missions are active in Australian expatriate communities and organisations, maintaining positive and productive links with the full range of expatriate Australians including professionals, business representatives, advisers, volunteers, consultants, artists, musicians and students. Many Australian missions work closely with resident Australian companies and social groups to promote Australian goods and services as well as information and cultural activities. They frequently draw on business leaders, other prominent expatriates and informal networks in major networking and public diplomacy events, often using sponsorship from Australian businesses. Resident Australian artists and musicians are also engaged at post functions and exhibitions to promote Australian art and culture.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 15 The committee recommends that DFAT conduct an independent survey of its overseas posts to assess their capacity to conduct effective public diplomacy programs. The survey would seek views on the effectiveness of the post's efforts in promoting Australia's interests, and how they could be improved, the adequacy of resources available to conduct public diplomacy activities, the training and skills of staff with public diplomacy responsibilities, the coordination between agencies in public diplomacy activities; and the level of support provided by the Images of Australia Branch (IAB) and how it could be improved. The survey would also seek a response from the overseas posts on observations made by the educational and cultural organisations, noted by the committee in this report, levelled at the delivery of Australia's public diplomacy programs. Such matters would include suggestions made to the committee that public diplomacy opportunities are being lost in the absence of an effective mechanism for the coordination of activities. See paragraphs 7.24–7.34 (alumni associations); 9.22–9.30 (cultural organisations); 9.41–9.44 (educational institutions); 10.23–10.39 (Australia's diaspora).	Noted.	DFAT has in place a rigorous process for evaluating its public diplomacy programs to assess the implementation of activities and events and their impact. (See also performance indicators outlined in comments on Recommendation 4). DFAT's public diplomacy programs are also reviewed annually as part of the departmental planning and review process to ensure they are: closely aligned with current national interest priorities; are appropriately funded; take advantage of developments in technology; and are well coordinated across target countries. These evaluations incorporate the views of other departments and agencies on posts' performance. Posts play a critical role in advocating Australia's interests internationally. DFAT provides public diplomacy training to both Australia-based and locally-engaged staff at posts. The department also provides a range of public diplomacy resources and tools to all overseas posts. The government has drawn the Senate Committee's report to the attention of all posts.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 16 The committee recommends that DFAT explore the application of innovative technologies to enhance the delivery of its public diplomacy programs.	Accepted.	DFAT will continue to explore the application of innovative technologies to enhance the delivery of its public diplomacy programs. DFAT has undertaken a comprehensive review of its website and is making improvements to ensure it is a more focused and effective tool for public diplomacy both in terms of design and the timeliness and relevance of content. The website was used very effectively to communicate the National Apology to the Stolen Generations which attracted significant international attention. Media releases, speeches, background documents and video are placed on the site and used by our posts in their own public diplomacy programs as well as by visitors to the DFAT website more broadly.
Recommendation 17 The committee recommends that, as a matter of priority, DFAT put in place specific performance indicators that would allow it to both monitor and assess the effectiveness of its public diplomacy programs.	Noted.	DFAT attaches high importance to evaluating and monitoring its public diplomacy programs and has in place rigorous mechanisms to evaluate performance, including a broad range of performance indicators (outlined in comment on Recommendation 4).
Recommendation 18 The committee recommends that, two years after the tabling of this report, DFAT provide the committee with a report on developments in, and reforms to, Australia's public diplomacy programs giving particular attention to the role and functions of the IDC and the way DFAT evaluates the effectiveness of its public diplomacy activities.	Accepted.	

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 19 The committee recommends that DFAT undertake a review of the nine bilateral foundations, councils and institutes (FCIs) with a view to assessing their effectiveness in contributing to the conduct of Australia's public diplomacy. The review should consider, among other matters, whether the FCIs should receive an increase in funding.	Noted.	Over the past three years, DFAT has conducted a series of specific reviews of its Foundations, Councils and Institutes (FCIs), both administered and departmental, to establish their effectiveness, appropriateness and efficiency in achieving the government's foreign and trade policy objectives and to determine their ongoing viability. Until 2006, funding for the International Relations Grant Programme (IRGP), which provides funding to the administered FCIs, was allocated as a four-year lapsing measure. In October 2006, at the conclusion of that four-year period, DFAT conducted, in consultation with the Department of Finance, an extensive review of the IRGP covering the period 2002-06. This review, which was required to determine future funding for the IRGP, critically assessed each grant recipient against performance indicators measuring effectiveness, appropriateness and efficiency. The review concluded that "the IRGP supports Australia's objectives in international security, trade and economic performance, global cooperation and public diplomacy" and that the "IRGP is an effective and efficient mechanism for using resources and it is recommended that it be extended as an ongoing measure at its current level to achieve the Government's foreign and trade policy". This recommendation was accepted and it was agreed that the IRGP funding be adjusted to be a program funded on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		The following FCIs were included in the review: • the Australia-Korea Foundation (AKF); • the Australia-Indonesia Institute (AII); • the Australia-China Council (ACC); and • the Australia-India Council (AIC). The following DFAT-funded Councils were established permanently following DFAT reviews of their effectiveness: Council for Australian-Arab Relations (2006); Council on Australia Latin America Relations (2007); Australia Thailand Institute (2008); and Australia Malaysia Institute (2008). Further, following review, the statutory Australia-Japan Foundation (AJF) was constituted on 1 December 2006 by Executive Council Orders as a bilateral body within DFAT on the same footing as other FCIs. The new arrangements have ensured a more appropriate governance structure for the Foundation and significantly improved its administrative efficiency and program delivery. With the repeal of the AJF's enabling legislation, the Foundation's program funding was transferred to DFAT's International Relations Grant Program Administered item. The Foundation is subject to the same departmental performance reviews as other FCIs. In addition to these specific reviews, as part of good governance arrangements, DFAT's Senior Executive conducts biannual performance reviews of all the FCIs, both administered and departmental, against the department's objectives, including public diplomacy. The results of these reviews are reported to the Ministers and are taken into account when determining funding allocations for the FCIs in the following year.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
Recommendation 20 The committee recommends that each FCI produce an annual report to be tabled in Parliament.	Noted.	Eight of the nine FCIs currently produce annual reports, which are available on the DFAT website: • Australia-China Council • Australia-Indonesia Institute • Australia-Japan Foundation • Australia-Korea Foundation • Australia-Malaysia Institute • Australia-Thailand Institute • Council on Australia Latin America Relations • Council for Australian-Arab Relations From 1 July 2008, all FCIs are required to produce an annual report for publication on the DFAT website. FCI financial statements and performance summaries are also included in DFAT's Annual Report.