

Chapter 1

Introduction and conduct of the inquiry

Referral of the inquiry

1.1 On 7 November 2006, the Senate referred the matter of the nature and conduct of Australia's public diplomacy to the committee for inquiry. The committee was to report by 29 March 2007. On 27 February, the Senate granted an extension to the committee's reporting date to 12 June 2007 which was extended further to 9 August and then to 16 August 2007.

Timing of the inquiry

1.2 This is the first inquiry conducted into Australia's public diplomacy by an Australian parliamentary committee. Although parliamentary committees have not considered Australia's public diplomacy programs as a distinct subject, some have recently inquired into Australia's relations with particular countries or regional organisations. For example the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee has examined APEC, and Australia's relations with Japan and China. The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade has also examined Australia's relations with specific countries, including the Republic of Korea and Malaysia. It is currently looking at Australia's relations with India. During the course of such inquiries, the committees have considered some aspects of Australia's public diplomacy.

1.3 Over recent years, however, public diplomacy has attracted growing attention. Many international commentators have noted its increasing significance with some asserting that public diplomacy 'matters more than ever' and should 'not be the poor relation of mainstream diplomacy'.¹ For example, in 1998 an advisory panel called for US public diplomacy to be moved from the sidelines to the core of diplomacy.² Commentators argue that public diplomacy can 'no longer be seen as an add-on to the rest of diplomacy—it has to be seen as a central activity which is played out across many dimensions and with many partners'.³ Recently, Professor Jan Melissen, Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael), referred to the frenzy

1 Report on Wilton Park Conference WPS06/21, *Public Diplomacy: Key Challenges and Priorities*, 12 March 2006.

2 CSIS, *Reinventing Diplomacy in the Information Age*, Final draft, 9 October 1998, p.12 of 135, <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/usiahome/pdforum/fulton.htm> (accessed 7 February 2007).

3 Mark Leonard with Catherine Stead and Conrad Smewing, *Public Diplomacy*, The Foreign Policy Centre, London, 2002, p. 95.

surrounding public diplomacy⁴ and suggested that it was 'the hottest topic under discussion in the world's diplomatic services':

Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) in all corners of the world pay more and more attention to their countries' reputation overseas, from Chile to Japan and from Canada to Indonesia. The discourse about 'PD' extends much beyond the world of diplomacy: not only diplomats but also academics, university students in international relations and even those who are targeted by the public diplomacy of states take an interest in this subject matter.⁵

1.4 In comparison to the interest in, and discussion on, public diplomacy overseas, the discourse on public diplomacy in Australia is silent. Indeed, a literature search on public diplomacy in Australia reveals a limited amount of work.

1.5 In light of the growing international recognition given to public diplomacy throughout the world, the committee believes that it is timely to review Australia's public diplomacy programs.

Terms of reference

1.6 Under the terms of reference, the committee is to inquire into the nature and conduct of Australia's public diplomacy, with particular reference to:

- (a) the extent and effectiveness of current public diplomacy programs and activities in achieving the objectives of the Australian Government;
- (b) the opportunities for enhancing public diplomacy both in Australia and overseas;

4 Jan Melissen, 'Public Diplomacy Between Theory and Practice', *The Present and Future of Public Diplomacy*, The 2006 Madrid Conference on Public Diplomacy, p. 9 of 28, <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documents/276.asp> (accessed 23 January 2007). Professor Jan Melissen is CDSP Director and Professor of Diplomacy at Antwerp University (Belgium). Professor Melissen is co-editor of the *Hague Journal of Diplomacy and Managing Editor of the web-based Discussion Papers in Diplomacy*. He has a wide-ranging research interest in contemporary diplomacy and published five books, including *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice* (Macmillan, 1999) and *The New Public Diplomacy* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005)

5 Jan Melissen, 'Public Diplomacy Between Theory and Practice', *The Present and Future of Public Diplomacy*, The 2006 Madrid Conference on Public Diplomacy, p. 7 of 28, <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documents/276.asp> (accessed 23 January 2007). See also Rainer Schlageter, 'German Public Diplomacy', *The 2006 Madrid Conference on Public Diplomacy*, p. 21 of 28, <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documents/276.asp> (accessed 23 January 2007) and Javier Noya, 'The United States and Europe: Convergence or Divergence in Public Diplomacy?', *The 2006 Madrid Conference on Public Diplomacy*, p. 12 of 28, <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documents/276.asp> (accessed 23 January 2007). Rainer Schlageter, Director of General Communication, Public Diplomacy and the Media, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted that 'For many states Public Diplomacy has become an increasingly important tool in the 'toolbox' of foreign policy in pursuance of their interests'. Javier Noya, Real Instituto Elcano, noted that 'the set of activities encompassed by public diplomacy is gaining significance in view of the role of public opinion in international politics'.

- (c) the effectiveness of and possible need to reform administrative arrangements relating to the conduct of public diplomacy within and between Commonwealth agencies and where relevant, the agencies of state governments; and
- (d) the need and opportunities for expanding levels of funding for Australia's public diplomacy programs, including opportunities for funding within the private sector.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.7 The committee advertised the terms of reference in the *Australian* in November 2006 and on a number of occasions before the closing date for receipt of submissions in mid-February 2007. The committee also wrote directly to a range of people and organisations including government departments and agencies, academics, cultural and sporting organisations inviting written submissions. The low response to the committee's call for submissions led to a second round of invitations and more advertising.

1.8 It should be noted, in particular, that some important government agencies such as Austrade and Tourism Australia did not make a submission. A number of other key departments had to be invited more than once before they lodged a written submission. All agencies invited to present oral evidence before the committee accepted the invitation.

Submissions

1.9 The committee received 31 public submissions which are listed at Appendix 1. It also placed on notice a number of questions to witnesses, the bulk of which were directed to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The answers to DFAT questions have been published on the committee's website.

Public hearings

1.10 The committee conducted five public hearings in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney. It also held a roundtable on 11 April in Canberra at which eight specialist teachers, researchers or practitioners of public diplomacy appeared before the committee and discussed a broad range of topics related to Australia's public diplomacy.

1.11 A list of the committee's public hearings, together with the names of witnesses who appeared, is at Appendix 2.



Participants in the Roundtable on public diplomacy which was held in Parliament House, Canberra, on 11 April 2007.

Structure of the report

1.12 The report is divided into two parts. In the first part, the committee examines the definition of public diplomacy. It considers the growing body of international literature on public diplomacy and the difficulties countries have in using public diplomacy to pursue their foreign policy objectives. Against the background of international developments in public diplomacy, the committee then provides an overview of Australia's public diplomacy including a description of public diplomacy activities funded or sponsored by the Australian Government.

1.13 The second part of the report provides a detailed examination of the many aspects of Australia's public diplomacy to determine its effectiveness and to identify opportunities to enhance it. The committee looks at:

- the challenges facing Australia to be seen and heard on the world stage;
- the effectiveness of Australia's public diplomacy in terms of:
 - the coherence, consistency and credibility of its message;
 - the network of relationships and communication systems that form the bedrock of public diplomacy;
 - the coordination of public diplomacy activities—between government departments and agencies and non-state entities including non-government organisations (NGOs);

- the training and qualifications of those responsible for the government's public diplomacy programs;
- the use of technology;
- the evaluation of Australia's public diplomacy programs; and
- the funding available for, and resources devoted to, Australia's public diplomacy activities.

1.14 In concluding the report, the committee looks at the opportunities for improving Australia's public diplomacy. It draws together the main themes developed in the report and makes its findings and recommendations.

Acknowledgments

1.15 The committee thanks all those who contributed to the inquiry by making submissions, providing additional information or appearing before it to give evidence.

