

# Chapter 15

## Australia's public diplomacy—committee's findings and recommendations

15.1 The committee found that Australia's public diplomacy is spread across a large canvas with many contributors. A significant number of government departments and agencies are engaged in work overseas that either directly or indirectly conveys to the world a positive image of Australia. The committee referred to just a few of these activities including Defence's Pacific Boat Program which is helping a number of countries in the Pacific better manage their maritime resources. AusAID and the Australian Sports Commission are forging strong friendly ties with other countries through the Australian Sports Outreach Program that is designed to develop leadership, promote social cohesion and improve the health of people in the Pacific region.

15.2 The committee also drew attention to the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program which is strengthening mutual understanding between the people of Australia and the countries of the Asia Pacific region. Similarly the Australian Leadership Awards Program is not only providing opportunities for overseas students and gifted scholars to study in Australia and to learn more about the country but to form lasting bonds with their Australian colleagues. Although on a different scale, the various visitors' programs are also highly effective in promoting shared understanding and strong links between people in Australia and people overseas.

15.3 The City of Melbourne highlighted its work with overseas cities and organisations that goes beyond a 'civic ceremonial basis into productive connections of broad social, economic and cultural benefit to Melbourne'.<sup>1</sup>

15.4 Organisations complement the work of government departments. ABC International is a 'major player' in representing Australia offshore. Through its radio and television broadcasting and online services, it encourages 'awareness of Australia and an international understanding of Australian attitudes on world affairs'.<sup>2</sup> The Australian Centre for Democratic Institutions conducts high-level courses for political leaders and officials. Asialink runs 'conversations' that bring together key leaders from ASEAN and Australia to discuss critical questions facing the region. These were primarily established to counter perceptions that Australia had 'turned its back on Southeast Asia'.<sup>3</sup> Australian universities through a diversity of programs are actively

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1 *Submission 11*, p. 2, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2007, p. 15.

2 *Submission 22*, p. 3.

3 *Asialink, 2004 Asialink Conversations, Report of Proceedings*, Jim Leibold, rapporteur and editor, p. 3.

cultivating a network of relations between Australian students and scholars and their counterparts overseas. These activities not only lead to better mutual understanding of cultures and different ways of life but they strengthen international collaboration and build a reservoir of goodwill toward Australia.

15.5 Australian cultural institutions are also aware of, and actively engaged in, building Australia's international reputation and encouraging a better understanding of Australia and its people. One important aspect of cultural institutions is their ability to maintain their people-to-people associations with an overseas country despite circumstances where formal diplomatic links may be strained. Educational institutions have this same ability.

15.6 There are many other private organisations with overseas connections that exert considerable influence on Australia's public diplomacy or have the potential to contribute to it. They include NGOs, especially those engaged in humanitarian work, sporting associations, businesses and Australia's diaspora.

15.7 The committee commends the work of Australia's government departments and agencies, the cultural and educational institutions and the many private organisations that are actively engaged in promoting Australia's reputation overseas. Many of these organisations are working quietly behind the scenes and, through word and deed, are helping to secure a presence for Australia on the international stage: to build a reputation that helps to advance Australia's interests internationally.

15.8 The committee notes, however, that Australia is in fierce competition with other countries also seeking to be heard on matters of importance to them. Some are devoting considerable resources to public diplomacy and even smaller countries such as Norway have developed public diplomacy strategies to gain a comparative advantage in international affairs. Canada is re-investing in its public diplomacy and making it 'central to its work'; Germany recognises that a modern strategic and coordinated public diplomacy can enrich and strengthen its reputation abroad. China has embarked on a 'charm offensive' in its public diplomacy to win international support for its peaceful rise. The UK has had two major reviews of its public diplomacy in just over five years and, as noted by the Director of the Public Diplomacy Institute, The George Washington University, the US has reached the point of 'report fatigue' with regard to its public diplomacy.<sup>4</sup>

15.9 To ensure that Australia's public diplomacy efforts are not overshadowed in the highly contested international space, Australia must ensure that it takes advantage of opportunities to capitalise on the positive outcomes from its many public diplomacy activities. The following section looks at some areas where it believes Australia could improve its public diplomacy achievements.

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4 Noted previously in the report at paragraph 3.3. Bruce Gregory, Public Diplomacy Institute, The George Washington University, 'Not Your Grandparents' Public Diplomacy', Public Diplomacy Retreat, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ottawa November 30, 2005, p. 3.

## Tracking opinions in key target countries

15.10 The committee notes that to be effective, Australia's public diplomacy must succeed in projecting messages that give greater breadth and substance to its image. They must reach their target audiences and influence in a positive way attitudes toward Australia. The committee believes that informed understanding provides the basis for identifying and formulating core messages and for delivering public diplomacy programs in the most appropriate way. Solid research and continuous assessment such as country surveys on attitudes toward Australia provide information for obtaining an understanding of people and organisations Australia seeks to inform and ultimately influence.

15.11 Although overseas posts monitor local media to obtain some insight into attitudes toward Australia and use other means such as immigration forms to ascertain the impressions individuals have of Australia, DFAT does not use any systematic or robust method of gathering and analysing data on overseas attitudes toward Australia. The committee acknowledges that research tools such as surveys are expensive but believes that for countries of vital importance to Australia, such as Indonesia and the island states of the Southwest Pacific, DFAT should consider using the necessary research tools to collect the data essential for informed understanding. The omnibus survey conducted in Japan between 1980 and 2002 serves as a model and could be conducted in countries of most significance to Australia.

### Recommendation 1 (paragraph 6.36)

**15.12 The committee recommends that DFAT give a higher priority to tracking opinions on 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.**

### Domestic diplomacy

15.13 The Australian Government has acknowledged the importance of broad community understanding of Australia's global environment and support for the policies it pursues to advance Australia's national interests.<sup>5</sup> It has stated its commitment to wide-ranging consultation within Australia to build broad community understanding of, and support for, Australia's foreign and trade policies.<sup>6</sup> The

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5 Commonwealth of Australia, *Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper*, 2003, p. 127.

6 Commonwealth of Australia, *Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper*, 2003, p. xx.

government maintains that it consults widely with interested groups through standing bodies and informal means.<sup>7</sup>

15.14 Even so, the committee found that generally Australians are not well-informed about Australia's public diplomacy or the programs that help to promote Australia's international reputation. It notes the recommendation by RMIT University that a public communication strategy targeting selected publics in Australia and overseas should be considered.<sup>8</sup>

### **Recommendation 2** (paragraph 6.49)

**15.15 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.**

### **People-to-people links**

#### *Exchange programs*

15.16 The committee not only supports programs such as the Australian Leadership Awards Program but also endorses measures that would increase the opportunities for international students to study in Australia and for Australian students to study overseas. These education programs are important building blocks for Australia's public diplomacy.

15.17 The committee believes that the Australian Government could offer stronger support for the various alumni organisations for foreign students who have studied in Australia. The scope to build on their contribution to Australia's public diplomacy warrants much closer government consideration. This observation is supported by previous parliamentary committees that have noted or recommended that the government 'take a more active role in working with Australian educational institutions to develop effective alumni programs'.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Commonwealth of Australia, *Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper*, 2003, p. 127. The White Paper mentioned the Foreign Affairs Council, the Trade Minister's World Trade Organization Advisory Group, DFAT's formal consultations twice a year with non-government organisations interested in human rights and the National Consultative Committee on Peace and Disarmament.

8 *Submission 9*, p. 3.

9 See Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, *Opportunities and challenges: Australia's relationship with China*, November 2005, p. 291.

**Recommendation 3** (paragraph 7.39)

**15.18 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.**

15.19 The committee welcomes the development of a database of overseas students who have studied under the Australian Leadership Awards Program. It believes that this database should have the highest priority but the committee sees it as only the first step in the right direction toward greater and continuing engagement with overseas students who have studied in Australia.

*Visitors programs*

15.20 The committee also recognises the benefits to Australia's public diplomacy that derive from the many visitors' programs conducted by DFAT and other agencies. It notes the comments by Asialink about providing opportunities to build on the relationships formed during visits or meetings.

15.21 The committee believes that the organisers or sponsors of visitors' programs should be required, when planning an activity, to take account of the possible longer term benefits that could accrue from a visit. It suggests that any plan for a visitors' or training program identify the measures that are to be taken to maintain and strengthen engagement with those involved in the program.

15.22 The committee is also of the view that the organisers or sponsors of visitors' programs should be required to report on the results of these relationship building measures and how they have contributed to Australia's public diplomacy. Such reports should be made available to the IDC, published on the organiser's website and referred to in an annual report.

**Recommendation 4** (paragraph 7.52)

**15.23 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.**

15.24 A number of previous parliamentary committees have recognised the importance of developing literacy in Asian languages and encouraging a better

understanding of the different cultures in the region.<sup>10</sup> The committee takes this opportunity to underline the need to support the learning of languages, particularly Asian languages, as part of Australia's overall strategy to strengthen bilateral ties.

### **Recommendation 5** (paragraph 7.61)

**15.25 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.**

### **Coordination**

15.26 The committee supports the general view that Australia needs a whole-of-government approach to its public diplomacy. The committee, however, found that, to date, the achievements of the IDC, the main body responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the whole-of-government's public diplomacy programs, were very modest. It also notes that a number of witnesses identified a need to improve the coordination of government public diplomacy activities with some suggesting that the current approach was 'fragmented'.

15.27 Australia needs a coherent public diplomacy plan if it is to meet today's challenges. It needs to identify core problems, devise effective solutions, define clear objectives and formulate an overall public diplomacy strategy. To do so, the IDC needs to assume a more decisive role in Australia's public diplomacy.

15.28 The committee believes that the government should consider measures that would make the IDC a more effective coordinating body. It is clear to the committee that there is a need for a central body to have stronger oversight of Australia's public diplomacy and to instil throughout government departments and agencies a sense of common purpose. As a first step, the committee believes that the IDC should be allowed the opportunity to prove itself capable of leadership, of providing direction and setting clear objectives for DFAT and all its public diplomacy partners. The committee believes that the IDC should be an advisory body to all government departments and agencies on how best to coordinate and, where possible, complement each others activities. It should also take an active role in ensuring that there is a solid core of public diplomacy specialists available to advise, guide and assist agencies in their public diplomacy activities. Its first task would be to map out a long-term strategic public diplomacy plan. To do so, it needs to be in close contact with Australia's key foreign policy makers and fully informed about relevant foreign policies.

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10 Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, *Opportunities and challenges: Australia's relationship with China*, March 2006, pp. 274–5. Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, Foreign Affairs Sub Committee, *Near Neighbours—Good Neighbours*, May 2004, Canberra, p. 147.

**Recommendation 6** (paragraph 8.43)

**15.29** 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.

15.30 The committee does not intend the IDC to encroach on the independence of statutory bodies such as the ABC or of NGOs bound by their own charters. The IDC would recognise and respect their independence. Its objective would be to work in partnership with them, advising and offering guidance and assistance where appropriate to maximise their contribution to Australia's public diplomacy.

**Recommendation 7** (paragraph 8.45)

**15.31 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.**

**Local councils and public diplomacy**

15.32 The committee acknowledges the commitment by the City of Melbourne to public diplomacy and notes that its active involvement in this area places it in a good position to offer constructive advice on how the Australian Government could work with councils to improve Australia's overall public diplomacy. It also draws attention to the recommendations of the Centre for Local Government which endorsed those of the City of Melbourne. The committee supports these recommendations but notes in particular the call for greater recognition by the Australian Government of the role of capital city governments in Australia's public diplomacy and for it to engage more effectively with local governments' international activities. It also draws attention to the suggestion that the Australian Government explore opportunities for collaborative public diplomacy activity between Australian capital city councils involved in promoting their cities internationally.<sup>11</sup>

**Recommendation 8** (paragraph 8.58)

**15.33 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.**

**Cultural institutions**

15.34 The committee notes the observations made by a number of representatives from cultural institutions that there is scope for better and more effective coordination between the institutions and government agencies involved in the overseas promotion of Australian culture. It is also aware of the criticism that, at the moment, there is a lack of long-term strategic planning which means that cultural institutions are not able to take full advantage of opportunities to showcase Australian art and culture and to contribute more effectively to Australia's public diplomacy.

**Recommendation 9** (paragraph 9.35)

**15.35 The committee recommends that the 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**

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11 *Submission 11*, p. 2.



**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).

#### **Recommendation 10** (paragraph 9.36)

**15.36** 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 Sports. The committee suggests that this would contribute significantly to greater coordination and cooperation in the area of cultural diplomacy.

15.37 Recommendation 9 would alert the AICC and relevant departments to the absence of long term strategic planning that continues to frustrate and disappoint cultural institutions endeavouring to take Australian art and culture to the world. The recommendation would not, however, tackle the practical problems of ensuring that the activities of government agencies, particularly the overseas posts, and cultural institutions complement one another. The committee believes that there is a need for a formal institutional structure to provide the necessary framework for the long term planning and coordination of cultural activities overseas.

#### **Recommendation 11** (paragraph 9.40)

**15.38** The committee recommends that the government establish a small but specifically tasked cultural and public diplomacy unit in the Department for 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.

#### **Educational institutions**

15.39 The comments made by Australian educators appearing before the committee follow closely those made by the cultural institutions. Both cultural and educational activities involve the exchange of ideas and information. They help to bring people together to develop a greater understanding and mutual appreciation of different cultures and ways of life. Witnesses spoke in broad terms about the contribution that cultural and educational activities make to portray a positive image of Australia and gave specific examples drawn from personal experience of where an activity had made a difference. Some were concerned, however, that 'the role and significance of universities in the conduct of Australia's public diplomacy is poorly articulated and relatively unexplored'.<sup>12</sup> They saw scope for greater 'public-private partnerships in public diplomacy'.<sup>13</sup>

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12 *Submission 9*, p. 2.

13 *Submission 8*, p. 5

15.40 The committee makes a similar suggestion to DFAT and DEST as it did to the AICC. It suggests that DFAT take note of the evidence presented to this committee, especially the comments and recommendations by RMIT with regard to the establishment of a better framework for industry engagement that would allow opportunities to be explored. The committee suggests that DFAT initiate and sponsor an open and public debate on proposals designed to allow both government departments and educational institutions to work better in partnership to promote Australia's interests abroad. It should also work with DEST and the universities to find ways that will achieve more productive engagement by universities in Australia's public diplomacy.

**Recommendation 12** (paragraph 9.52)

**15.41 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 DEST and the Vice Chancellors of Australian Universities appropriate strategies to facilitate a more productive engagement by these institutions in Australia's public diplomacy.**

**Recommendation 13** (paragraph 9.53)

**15.42 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.**

15.43 There are many government agencies, private sector entities and individuals who have made, or could make, a contribution to the effectiveness of Australia's public diplomacy. Australia is not alone in grappling with this problem of successfully integrating the activities of many NGOs and individuals into the one framework. A dominant theme in overseas literature on public diplomacy concentrates on the importance of coordination and strategic planning. Many refer to the need 'to foster synergies between activities of governments and societal actors'.<sup>14</sup>

15.44 Australia's diaspora was one area in particular that attracted the committee's attention. It believes that the opportunities to engage Australian expatriates more actively and constructively in promoting Australia overseas are not fully explored. Evidence to the committee reinforced previous calls for measures to be taken to ensure that the network of Australians living abroad is regarded as a vital part of the Australian community with significant potential to make a valuable contribution to Australia's public diplomacy. These earlier findings and recommendations called for diaspora engagement to be an explicit aim of DFAT.

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14 See for example, Bátorá J., *Multistakeholder Public Diplomacy of Small and Medium-Sized States: Norway and Canada Compared*, Paper presented to the International Conference on Multistakeholder Diplomacy, Mediterranean Diplomatic Academy, Malta, February 11–13 November 2005, p. 4.

**Recommendation 14** (paragraph 10.42)

**15.45** The committee recommends that DFAT review the findings of the Lowy report, *Diaspora*, 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.

**Training for public diplomacy**

15.46 The committee recognises that DFAT faces a major challenge ensuring that it has the skills set necessary to deliver effective public diplomacy, including highly developed communication and public relations skills. Although all DFAT officers should be skilled in the art of public diplomacy, the committee accepts that not all can be trained specialists in the area of communications and public relations. Although, the committee does not support the creation of a unit of public diplomacy specialists, it does see a very clear need for the department to ensure that it has the correct balance of specialists and generalists engaged in Australia's public diplomacy. It is important for public diplomacy to be seen as a mainstream activity and not the reserve of specialists located in a separate unit.

15.47 The committee notes the concerns that locally engaged staff, who have a significant role in a post's public diplomacy, may not be privy to communications or discussions relevant to their area of responsibility and whose knowledge of Australia may limit their ability to carry out their duties effectively. The committee understands that DFAT has in place training programs designed to mitigate some of these problems. Even so, the committee believes that if public diplomacy is to be accepted as a mainstream activity, the department should review the staffing arrangements of their posts to ensure that public diplomacy is not relegated to junior officers or locally engaged staff and that all staff have appropriate training.

**Diplomacy as a mainstream activity**

15.48 The committee notes the measures DFAT has in place to ensure that its officers involved in public diplomacy are integrated into the department's public diplomacy network and well briefed on the government's broader public diplomacy objectives. The committee believes that DFAT must ensure that its stated policy of public diplomacy as an integral part of mainstream diplomacy is supported by action that clearly demonstrates that public diplomacy is a highly valued activity in the department.

15.49 To ensure that the department is able to meet the growing challenges of conducting an effective public diplomacy policy, the committee believes it would be timely for DFAT to commission an independent survey of its overseas posts to ascertain their needs when it comes to public diplomacy. The survey would cover

issues such as training and resources available for public diplomacy, access to specialists in public relations and the media and the effectiveness of IAB in meeting the needs of posts in carrying out their public diplomacy activities.

**Recommendation 15** (paragraphs 11.31 and 11.32)

**15.50** 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 IAB and how it could be improved.

**15.51** 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 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).

**Modern technology**

**15.52** In the highly competitive field of public diplomacy, Australia needs to make sure that those responsible for managing and delivering public diplomacy programs are taking full advantage of advances in technology to reach the global audience. It is an area of rapid transformation. If Australia is to hold its own in competition with other countries, it must be at the forefront of developments in technology and have the experts able to exploit them. Australia's public diplomacy practitioners need to be constantly alert to developments in technology and be able to use them to best effect in their work. This need emphasises the importance of having highly skilled and qualified communicators who monitor the latest advances in technology, are able to think creatively in how to apply them to public diplomacy and to educate others in their use.

**Recommendation 16** (paragraph 12.15)

**15.53** The committee recommends that DFAT explore the application of innovative technologies to enhance the delivery of its public diplomacy programs.

**Evaluation**

**15.54** The committee acknowledges that evaluating public diplomacy is not easy. It notes the advice from a number of witnesses that, although difficult, the evaluation of Australia's public diplomacy programs can and should be done. According to ANAO, if an agency is asserting that their program is effective, there is an expectation that it

has 'mechanisms in place to measure that effectiveness'.<sup>15</sup> The committee agrees with this assessment and is strongly of the view that DFAT should improve its methods for measuring the effects of its public diplomacy programs over time. At the moment there is no concrete evidence that DFAT is systematically measuring progress in achieving its public diplomacy objectives.

15.55 Evidence to this committee on the need for DFAT to evaluate its public diplomacy programs was compelling. It draws attention especially to observations made by the ANAO on the importance of measuring the effects of public diplomacy programs over time or progress toward public diplomacy objectives. As already noted, DFAT does not have such indicators in place and as a matter of urgency, the committee recommends that DFAT put in place performance indicators that will allow it to monitor and assess the effectiveness of its public diplomacy programs.

#### **Recommendation 17** (paragraph 13.56)

**15.56 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.**

15.57 The committee can also see a valuable role for the ANAO in assisting DFAT improve its evaluation processes. Accordingly, the committee requests that the ANAO conduct a performance audit of DFAT's public diplomacy programs.

**15.58 The committee requests that the Australian National Audit Office consider undertaking a performance audit of DFAT's public diplomacy programs giving particular attention to the evaluation of the effectiveness of such programs.**

## **Funding**

### *Foundations, councils and institutes (FCIs)*

15.59 The committee agrees with the view that the funding for the FCIs is 'modest'. It accepts advice from the representatives of the councils that appeared before it that their activities are constrained by limited funding. The committee also notes that the nine FCIs have come into existence over a period of time and under different instruments. It suggests that it would be timely for DFAT to review the bodies as distinct entities and then as a group with a view to identifying any anomalies that may have arisen since the Australia–Japan Foundation was established in 1978 and which create unnecessary duplication in functions or in administration. The committee is in no doubt that increased funding to the FCIs would boost Australia's public diplomacy efforts.

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15 *Committee Hansard*, 15 May 2007, p. 7.

**Recommendation 19** (paragraph 14.27)

**15.60** The committee recommends that DFAT undertake a review of the 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.

15.61 The committee suggests that for increased accountability, the FCIs be required to produce an annual report and for the Minister to table the report in Parliament. This requirement would not alter the current arrangement of DFAT's annual report containing a summary of the FCI reports.

**Recommendation 20** (paragraph 14.29)

**15.62** The committee recommends that each FCI produce an annual report to be tabled in Parliament.

15.63 The committee welcomes the increased funding of \$20.4 million over four years to enhance Australia's cultural exports. It will allow Australia's cultural institutions to continue their valuable work in promoting Australia's reputation overseas.

**Conclusion**

15.64 DFAT has already undertaken to introduce a number of changes to improve the effectiveness of its public diplomacy—using the IDC to arrive at a clear and agreed definition of public diplomacy and including personnel from other agencies in DFAT's pre-posting workshops. If the ANAO agrees to undertake an audit, the results from this audit would provide further guidance on the measures DFAT needs to have in place to determine the effectiveness of its programs. The committee has also made a number of recommendations designed to make Australia's public diplomacy more effective. In light of anticipated changes and the increased funding to Australia's public diplomacy, the committee believes that it should, in time, have the opportunity to review progress.

**Recommendation 18** (paragraph 13.65)

**15.65** 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.

Senator Marise Payne

CHAIR