

MEDIA RELEASE

April 2013

Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

Significance of the Indian Ocean rim for Australia's foreign, trade and defence policy

The Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee will be undertaking a busy visit program in the Pilbara region in late April 2013. The visit program will be part of the committee's inquiry into the significance of the Indian Ocean for Australia's foreign, trade and defence policy.

Senator Alan Eggleston, Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, noted that the visit program will give the committee an appreciation of the strategic importance of the North West, as well as of the scale of industry in the area.

Terms of reference

The committee's inquiry looks at the significance of the Indian Ocean rim for Australia's foreign, trade and defence policy with particular reference to:

- a) Trade and tourism opportunities for Australia, including the role of free trade agreements;
- b) Australian mineral exports, including competition and synergies in the region;
- c) Strategic developments in the Indian Ocean, including growing naval influences and defence postures and their implications for Australia and the region more generally;
- d) The Indian Ocean Rim Association and any other relevant bodies and their future directions; and
- e) Other relevant matters.

Visit program

The committee's visit program will include visits to Defence establishments and key infrastructure such as ports in Exmouth, Karratha, Dampier and Port Hedland. The visit program will allow senators to gain valuable insight into the situation of an important region on Australia's border with the Indian Ocean.

Inquiry

The committee has received 42 submissions and conducted five public hearings, including a roundtable with leading academics. Senator Alan Eggleston, Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, noted that the amount of evidence received and interest generated by the inquiry has been very encouraging. The committee hopes that its inquiry has helped to raise awareness of the opportunities and challenges for Australia in the Indian Ocean rim and the need for policy makers to make sure this important area is included in future policy making.

For further information about the inquiry:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=fadt_ctte/indianocean/index.htm

Members of the committee:

Senator Alan Eggleston, Chair

Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens, Deputy Chair

Senator Mark Bishop, Senator David Fawcett, Senator Helen Kroger, and Senator Scott Ludlam.

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