

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

**Senate Standing Committee on Finance
and Public Administration**

**MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE**

December 1992

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ISBN 0 642 18480 1

This report was produced from camera ready copy prepared by the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration and printed by the Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, Canberra.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

departmental reorganisation

1. if the Government decides to retain a specialist public relations capacity within DFAT, it should do so in such a way as to maintain a viable core of specialisation within a single branch;
2. that branch be given clear and unambiguous objectives related to the undertaking of specific public relations campaigns and activities (Paragraph 3.66);

allegations by the DFAT Reform Group

3. no Commonwealth investigative or administrative review agency inquire into any further allegations about DFAT made by Mr Carroll or the DFAT Reform Group unless and until they provide substantive evidence to support the allegations (Paragraph 5.35);

personnel management issues

4. DFAT bring together its various staff welfare initiatives into a specific sub-program directly answerable to the appropriate Deputy Secretary position (Paragraph 7.18);
5. DFAT adapt its *Statement of Service* publication into a skills register by seeking basic information on postings, educational qualifications and other skills in standard format from all members of its staff and by maintaining that information in a sortable format (Paragraph 7.29);
6. in its response to this report, the Government report on the effectiveness of the development diary system with particular regard to whether there is scope for making the essential components of the system mandatory and whether there is scope for extending the system to SES officers (Paragraph 7.34);
7. completion of the appraiser's self-assessment in DFAT's development diary to be made mandatory with a requirement that it be countersigned by the person being appraised, with provision for that person to comment if he or she wishes, and a requirement for review by the appraiser's supervisor (Paragraph 7.35);
8. DFAT, OPG and the Department of Finance jointly review the feasibility of allowing at least some officers to receive an allowance and rent their own accommodation instead of residing in government-supplied residential accommodation at posts where it could reasonably be expected that officers do so (Paragraph 8.17);

general management issues

9. DFAT account for passport fee revenue in a way that separates the components of the fee which apply to passport production costs, consular services, and the remainder of the fee (Paragraph 8.26);
10. Australia have a standard passport with a system of endorsements to certify the position held by or status of the person to whom the passport is issued;
11. there should also be the option of some distinctive endorsement to be embossed on the covers of passports issued to Australian officers posted overseas, especially where such an endorsement might offer operational advantage or increased safety (Paragraph 8.31);
12. DFAT comment in detail in its 1992-93 Annual Report on the measures it has taken to improve its records and information-retrieval systems and provide evidence of the success of those measures (Paragraph 8.38);
13. the Government response to this report outline the measures taken by DFAT to ensure that its methods of payment of locally engaged staff do not breach or facilitate breaches of taxation law in Australia or overseas (Paragraph 8.44);
14. DFAT, in reporting on the activities of its Evaluation and Audit Section in its 1992-93 Annual Report, comment on the extent to which its internal audit program has been aligned with the audit priorities of the Australian National Audit Office (Paragraph 8.58);
15. all cases of apparently unauthorised release of information within DFAT's area of responsibility be recorded in the Department's list of leak investigations, including the release of information on individual current or former members of the Department's staff and the release of information other than by DFAT officers;
16. summary information from the schedule be reported in the section of DFAT's annual report relating to fraud control (Paragraph 9.18);
17. DFAT adopt a policy of:
 - (a) referring to the Australian Federal Police for investigation all cases where information classified at Confidential level or higher appears to have been released without authority; and
 - (b) where appropriate, referring to the Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration of prosecution under the Crimes Act any future case in which an officer appears to be culpably responsible for the unauthorised release of classified information (Paragraph 9.24);
18. pre-posting security training be made mandatory for all officers who have not previously undergone such training and a Diplomatic Security Section briefing prior to posting be made mandatory in all cases (Paragraph 9.30);

conditions of service issues

19. responsibility for the setting and administration of overseas conditions of service be transferred from DIR to an independent body within the Industrial Relations Portfolio comprising members drawn from the overseas operating agencies, the Department of Finance and the Department of Industrial Relations (Paragraph 10.46);
20. all overseas operating agencies which do not already have a management-staff consultative body with specific responsibility for overseas conditions should establish one; this might conveniently take the form of a sub-committee of an established management-staff consultative committee (Paragraph 10.48);
21. the anachronistic general entitlement to boarding school fees at any school in the UK or Australia be replaced by an entitlement to assistance with boarding expenses associated with education at any school provided the officer can justify the need to board a child or children and subject to an upper limit on the Australian Government contribution equivalent to the limit that currently applies in relation to boarding school fees in Australia (Paragraph 10.51);
22. the Government expedite the consideration of the proposals for:
 - . a right to leave without pay so that a spouse can accompany an officer on posting;
 - . a right for a spouse on leave without pay to continue contributing to an Australian Government superannuation scheme; and
 - . remission of rent and utility contributions if an officer is required to maintain a household in Australia for a dependent family member;and inform the Parliament of the decisions in each case in its response to this report (Paragraph 11.26);
23. DFAT regard as a matter of urgency the negotiation of as many reciprocal employment agreements as possible and give those negotiations a high priority (Paragraph 11.27);
24. the family component of Overseas Living Allowance be paid directly to spouses (Paragraph 11.27);
25. DFAT ensure that the planning for the proposed York Park office building provide for the Family Liaison Officer and related advisory facilities for officers and spouses to be located in an area of the building that is readily accessible (Paragraph 11.27);
26. DFAT and the Department of Finance jointly review the possibility of improving cash management in the representation funding system by replacing as large a proportion as possible of the present representation advances with direct

payments by DFAT or with reimbursement of expenses as they are incurred (Paragraph 11.44);

27. all payments to domestic staff of Australian Government officers posted overseas be made directly by the administrative units at their posts (Paragraph 11.46);
28. the Departments of Administrative Service and Industrial Relations review the arrangements for the issue of private-plated cars to SES officers with a view to extending the entitlement to government-supplied petrol during periods of leave subject to an increase in the officers' contribution (Paragraph 11.51);
29. Australian Government officers and their dependants overseas be prevented from purchasing cars free of duty but be permitted to lease from the Australian Government cars of a reasonable but limited range of makes and styles or to participate in arrangements for the use of government cars for private purposes, subject to a contribution towards the cost of that use (Paragraph 11.64);
30. pending a decision on recommendation 29, DFAT should immediately reduce the entitlement of SES or equivalent officers, including heads of mission, to purchase cars free of duty when posted overseas from two to one per posting (Paragraph 11.65);

disciplinary system and standards of conduct

31. high priority be given to amending the Public Service Act to provide for the extension of the standard disciplinary procedures under the Act to heads of diplomatic missions and posts (Paragraph 12.24);
32. the Public Service disciplinary system be changed to provide for disciplinary proceedings to be public at least to the extent of the fact that charges have been laid, their nature and the outcome (Paragraph 12.29);
33. DFAT institute a continuing system designed to ensure that its officers at all levels are familiar with the *Guidelines on Official Conduct for Public Servants* and supplement those guidelines with material designed to relate the guidelines to its own operating environment, to impress their importance on all its staff, and to make clear to all DFAT officers the importance of consistent application of departmental and public service instructions (Paragraph 12.34).