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Senate Select Committee
Ministerial Discretion In Migration Matters
SG 60
The Senate, Parliament House
Canberra 2601

Fax 02 6277 5809

August 7, 2003

Introduction

Many serious observers have concluded that there is a direct link between ministerial discretion political fund raising, and the possibility & probability of influence and corruption. This inquiry is a consequence of recent published events.

I quote for the Committee's further interest an article written by Dennis Shannahan in The Australian 27 July 2003, which adds clarity to the subject.

"Donation gravy train running politicians off the rails of public credibility"

Comment – "Political donations are dynamite. Any minister who exercises discretionary power is open to allegations of bias as soon as they accept funds from interested parties. Premiers, police and planning ministers at State level are always subject to suspicion if they make decisions involving people who are giving them or their party donations. Prime Ministers, Treasurers, Attorneys-General and Immigration Ministers likewise are all open to allegations just by being seen to be accepting donations and subsequently exercising ministerial discretion in related areas. Further, fundraisers involving middle men and acquaintances can allow a climate of corruption and an appearance of favours to be exploited by people over whom the Minister has no control and little knowledge. Private dinners, where people pay exorbitant amounts for access to leaders, smack of Third World cronyism that corrupts and enervates societies. This applies to all sides of politics and should be stopped."

My information to the Committee relates to two aspects.

- 1) Liberal Party fund raising in the Berowra Electorate and
- 2) The Philippines Connection.

I have close personal experience with both subjects.

Firstly I was President of the Normanhurst Branch of the Liberal Party for some years in the early 1990's

And

I was a permanent resident in The Philippines from the mid '70's to 1990.

After living in PNG and Asia since the mid 50's I returned to Australia and joined the Liberal Party. Three things were immediately apparent.

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The Party electorate-wise, was dysfunctional mainly because of the age of the members. The Party represented capitalism and business, yet had no financial reserves, no working capital and in the case of Australian Vietnamese, people who had fled socialism, were represented by a socialist member in Western Sydney – to me these were strange facts.

I joined the Liberal Party purely for personal interest, and I set about trying to get some professionalism into the local structure. My ideas and outspokenness were accepted with the usual village resentment and hostility. The dinghy had not been rocked for years

After some time, I was elected President of the Normanhurst branch and set about changes that hopefully would have made the branch structures and fund raising more effective and meaningful. At the same time, the current Minister for Immigration and Federal Member for Berowra, Philip Ruddock transferred from Dundas as a consequence of boundary redistribution.

It was evident to myself and others that the party was in urgent need of internal reform, a cleansing out of ambitious pre selection hopefuls with troubled pasts [REDACTED] and a perennial lack of quality members and money.

The new Parliamentary member was at first very supportive, however it became obvious he had his own agenda and style that he considered suited the electorate i.e. he controlled all aspects of party activity. He did not want to act on these deficiencies and strangely supported the old guard.

During early discussions, it became obvious that the member brought with him a considerable amount of funds from his previous electorate. He was proud of that fact, and boasted that he was a very effective fundraiser.

Over the years, slowly, with purpose, the whole "Berowra" scene changed. Many good people with considerable political potential were frustrated out of the party, either through sheer boredom or alienation it was a move to the hard right, but that's another story.

Fundraising was always a problem, and the efforts of 350 card carrying Berowra Liberals were miniscule. You can only eat so many Liberal Lamingtons. Most, if not all branches were in arrears with the State and Federal Executives concerning annual levies year after year. However, the member always had enough funds to support other electorates (Robertson etc.) at election time, especially when there was need for the financial fireman. This money could not have come from chook raffles.

Being an ex Papua New Guinea Senior Treasury Inspector, the source of unexpected and unexplained funds has always been of interest to me.

At appropriate times, I asked to see the FEC financial statements to find some understanding for this loaves and fishes phenomenon, however these were, for some reason, continually not

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available. However there were always exhortations for the raising of more money, as we never had enough.

I suggested that seeing the party always had a fixation on money, why not go to where the money was in our community –i.e. the Lebanese and the Chinese. This imitative was greeted with horror and was explained that these two community groups were the personal interest areas of the elected member, being at that time the Shadow Minister for Immigration.

One kindly soul explained to me further that these ethnic groups were not welcome, as members because they would not fit in with our old time members.

Another pointed out that my moves to get our meetings out of private homes and protestant church halls were dangerous. "The Meetings were held there to keep the ethnics out silly."

As an example, very recently an Australian Lebanese gentleman, Mr. David Baynie, sought election as President of the Hornsby Branch. His ambitions were frustrated when the powers that be approved an annual general meeting ballot by phone on the night of Mr. Baynie's move. The sick and lame members at home were contacted and he was defeated even though he had sufficient legal members at the meeting.

So sadly it seems the ordinary Liberal in Berowra never gets to meet the very generous ethnic/multicultural donors. The likes of Tan, Foo and Kiswani and others are a mystery to the members. I understand that some sizeable donations collected recently did not go through the local books but went directly to what is called the Millennium Fund, which in turn paid the money to the State/Federal executives. No doubt everyone here knows why that procedure is adopted, rather than the Liberal branch acknowledge gifts, donations openly and locally. I understand that more than \$100,000 was raised for each of the last three Federal elections.

The Philippine Connection

I had the good fortune to live continuously in The Philippines for 15 years in the 70's and 80's; time of martial law, revolutions passive and violent, and as a consequence, like many I became a keen observer of the political system, the people and Filipino culture.

When it comes to officialdom, bureaucracy and politics "no" is an unacceptable answer to the enquirer. It is known that a "no" is a "yes" with conditions and obligations for "yes" with conditions and obligations for both parties involved. The Filipinos ever have a term for this obligation. It's called "*Untan na loob*" and roughly translated means "*debt of gratitude*".

So when a barrier is encountered it is assumed that the barrier will evaporate with a liberal dosing of "*utang na loob*". The debt of gratitude generally transforms into money.

I am a life member and past vice president of the Australia/Philippines Business Council. Because of that involvement, I have many years been approached by Filipinos and Australians to intercede on their behalf with either the Department or Mr. Ruddock on Immigration matters.

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Minister Ruddock obviously was aware of my connections with The Philippines and from time to time discussed with me various issues, and once I arranged for him to address the Australian New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in a breakfast meeting. My last formal contact with the Minister was on 18th September 2000 where I introduced IT people from The Philippines and America. They were members of the Australia Philippines Business Council, and wanted to bring in 80 IT workers on a temporary short-term basis to assist with a special project in this country. The purpose of the meeting was to impart first hand the complete frustration experienced by this company (and other member companies) when dealing with the Manila migration post.

The Manila Immigration office is under siege circumstances. The department there goes it alone, and I understand that even diplomatic staff is barred from Interceding or even enquiring about any individual immigration matters.

Previously applications and inquiries to Immigration Manila were in the 100's of thousands on an annual basis, however new arms length contact and substantially raised fees have reduced the number of applications. The office is recognized as the toughest in Asia and is very skilled in detailing applicants with problem pasts.

Attached are copies of two pertinent letters/papers on the difficulties many people encountered when dealing with the Department in Manila.

In the matter of Dante Tan and others, I have some observations. The biggest fish in Philippine waters slipped through the tightest net. How did this happen?

Also why would a Filipino Chinese seek the help of an unknown Lebanese middleman when it would have been natural for him to seek out a fellow countryman or an expert in Filipino Australian migration matters. There are many authorized legal migration agents of Filipino descent that are fully capable of handling difficult case such as Tans. On the basis of past information and evidence in the public domain, Mr. Tan would have been told he had no chance of getting to Australia.

And it's a long bow to see a Chinese work through a Lebanese – That's just not the way things are done in the real world where contact between ethnic groups is necessary they seek like brothers (countrymen).

There is no friendship connection between Chinese and Lebanese anywhere. There is no alliance, never has been.

How was Mr. Dante Tan so lucky in passing through or avoiding all the well-honed detection procedures at the Manila office that are designed to highlight the very deficiencies that Mr. Tan had. The Manila Officers are the experts at finding out shortfalls, provided they have been asked, or are processing applications in the usual manner. No doubt these are uncomfortable facts.

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General

I have spoken with some MP's and their general opinion is that immigration causes them more demands than any other electorate matter, and there are very few rewards for pursuing their constituents complicated problems and the very large majority of enquirers are dissatisfied and annoyed at that inability of the member to fix or resolve these very personal migration matters. Ross Cameron stated in his local paper that he had over 1000 immigration files and more than 300 were active. With 100 members of both Parliaments it is fair to presume that Ross Cameron's statistics are replicated for most of them.

I understand that some senior long term immigration officers are annoyed at the continual interference and enquiry from outsiders seeking information or wishing to reverse decisions made by their staff.

Conclusion.

It is accepted that only the stupid or sycophantic would donate money to political parties without expecting some special favour in return. In the Philippines they call political donations of substance as bribes in advance.

Political parties seem to embrace or become a magnet to those less than favoured in the community. Another example is the tobacco industry. The political donation system is based on sneakiness rather than openness, which is supposed to be the basis of the Electoral Commissions guidelines.

All efforts should be made to contact Mr. Dante Tan concerning his business visa and Australian citizenship approvals. Reports circulating in Manila say that Mr. Tan has a different version to the official version. When located he should, as an Australian citizen be invited to explain to this committee his recollections and the reasons and actual costs of his successful intercession and applications, as well as generous donations.

The many strange events uncovered demonstrate that they do not happen by chance or coincidental misfortune.

The current system as exposed in the media and concluded by many, is very similar to corrupt behaviour in third world countries. All sides of politics, and the overseeing bureaucracies seem to pay lip service to the lose rules.

It will be interesting to compare the past donations from Tan, Foo and the Buddhists in 2003/2004/2005. This will demonstrate their interest and commitment to the Liberal Party.

Did the Minister neglect basic due diligence? It appears he did not exercise ministerial caution. Obviously the Tan and Foo meetings had not been referred to ministers or departmental experts to check the bona fides because the Minister was completely comfortable with the character and arrangements.

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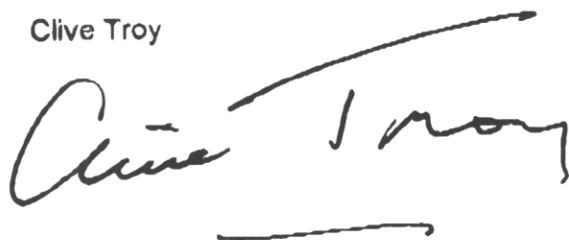
Mr. Ruddock is not naïve, he measures and fully understands the consequences before he acts – he is a lawyer, a politician, and a Government Minister and a very cautious man. He is known as and accepts the title of Father of the House. Why would a Minister invite this type of pressure – and compromise?

To quote Greg Sheridan, in another related matter, but in this context – *“There is a culture of unaccountability”*. Some will reject these comments out of hand in usual Parliamentary fashion of denial. After all looking at the printed record since 1996, the Minister and advisors claim to be always right, therefore everyone else is always wrong.

I am available to appear before the committee if that is necessary.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Troy

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clive Troy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending from the top of the "T" across the top of the signature.

7 June 2003

The Manila Times NEWS

DOJ to request Australia, Interpol help to hunt Tan

THE Department of Justice (DOJ) will coordinate with the Australian government in tracking down the whereabouts of fugitive Dante Tan, who has reportedly left Australia a day before the Philippine government filed a request for his provisional arrest.

In an interview, Justice Undersecretary Merceditas Gutierrez said a request for Tan's provisional arrest was submitted Friday before the Attorney General of Australia.

Gutierrez said the justice department would also ask the International Police (Interpol) to assist them in locating Tan, who is facing a string of cases in connection with the BW Resources stock manipulation scandal a few years back.

"We'll think of ways and means to try to get him back," she said.

Gutierrez said Tan's departure from Australia would not render the request moot and academic because he has no other place to return to except Australia and Philippines because of visa requirements imposed in most countries.

She added that the government would also seek the cancellation of his passport so he can be deported.

"We still don't know what passport he is using right now. We can have it cancelled so he can be deported," Gutierrez said.

The justice undersecretary said Tan may have been alerted by his counsel about the existing extradition treaty between Australia and the Philippines, prompting him to leave in a hurry.

Tan is wanted in the country due to the outstanding warrants of arrest against him for violation of the Revised Securities Act in connection with the BW scam.

Tan voluntarily surrendered on December 20, 2000 and posted a bail of P120,000.

On February 2, 2001, Tan asked the Pasig City Regional Trial Court's permission to leave the country to attend a business meeting in Hong Kong on February 14 to 18.

The justice department issued a hold departure order against Tan on February 14, 2001, after the court decided the day before to allow him to go abroad.

The justice department said it would investigate to determine those responsible for Tan's escape from the country.

Tan, who has managed to acquire Australian citizenship, is now the subject of an investigation in Australia for alleged illegal campaign contribution.

Australian Immigration Minister Philipp Ruddock announced Tan's departure from Australia before the Australian Parliament. He said the Australian authorities could not prevent Tan from leaving the country since the Philippine government has not filed a request for extradition.

Ruddock was the one who ordered the investigation on Tan, whom he said misled his department into granting him Australian citizenship and contributing funds to his reelection campaign despite his charges in the Philippines.

Ruddock told the Australian Parliament on June 3 that Tan was granted citizenship after he signed a declaration that he did not have any criminal convictions and that he was not subject to current charges.

Earlier, the justice department said it is now preparing all the documents necessary for the filing of the extradition request against Tan.

JOEL R. SAN JUAN

Russell

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

13. C. 2003



DOJ mum on Dante Tan's whereabouts

By Philip C. Tubera

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice yesterday said fugitive businessman Dante Tan is not in Singapore, but it knows where he is hiding.

Undersecretary Mercedes Gutierrez said "official sources" told the DOJ yesterday about Tan's whereabouts, which she was not revealing so as not to jeopardize efforts to bring him back to the Philippines.

"It's better not to divulge where he is so that we could do all we can to bring him back," Gutierrez said.

She said the DOJ will ask the Department of Foreign Affairs if Tan's Philippine passport has been cancelled.

Tan, who is wanted for the biggest insider trading scam in the history of the Philippine Stock Exchange, fled ahead of the ouster in January 2001 of his close friend and

crony, former President Joseph Estrada.

He was reported to have gone to Australia where he soon found himself embroiled in an immigration scandal, which forced him to sneak out of that country last June 4.

It was reported that he had flown to Singapore but this could not be confirmed.

Formal representation

Yesterday, Gutierrez said she wanted to clarify that Tan was not in Singapore, and she did not want people to think the government was doing nothing to bring him back.

She said the DOJ is planning to make formal representations with the officials of the country Tan is hiding in for the businessman's repatriation.

"We could ask for his surrender if the law of that country allows it," she said.

After arriving in Australia, Tan was quickly able to obtain a business visa and soon after Australian citizenship in May 2002.

It was later revealed that he had contributed A\$10,000 to the political party of Australia's Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock in 2001. Ruddock has denied any impropriety.

The Philippines was about to ask Australia to extradite Tan when the businessman fled that country.

Tan is facing charges before the Pasig City Regional Trial Court in connection with the alleged manipulation of Best World Resources stocks, which nearly caused the collapse of the local stock market in 1999. The court issued three arrest warrants against him.

The scam contributed to the ouster of Estrada, for whose benefit primarily the stock manipulation was allegedly engineered.

SATURDAY
JUNE 7, 2000

Kucel's

PHILIPPINE SUNDAY MORNING EDITION

A 5

Tan may have escaped to Singapore

By Armand N. Noam

CONTROVERSIAL businessman Dante Tan may have escaped to Singapore or another country with whom the Philippines does not have an extradition treaty.

In a press briefing yesterday, Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo said Tan could have left Australia in a chartered plane or a yacht to escape detection.

Tan fled Australia after a scandal broke out over his alleged donation of A\$10,000 (roughly P350,000) to the Liberal Party of Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock. Shortly after making the donation, Tan allegedly received an investor's visa and later Australian citizenship.

"We are now working with Singapore immigration officials," Domingo said, adding that the Bureau of Immigration had received a tip about Tan's flight to Singapore. She said they were not ruling out the possibility he may be intending to go to Hong Kong. The

Philippines has no extradition treaty with either Singapore or Hong Kong.

"He could be looking for a country with whom we do not have an extradition treaty. His problem is that he does not have any travel documents," Domingo said.

Australia, meanwhile, has issued a global alert for Tan.

Ruddock said on Friday Canberra was considering whether to strip Tan of his Australian citizenship after it was discovered he was wanted in the Philippines for questioning over alleged stock price manipulations in 1999.

Justice Undersecretary Mercedes Gutierrez said Manila submitted a request late on Thursday asking Australian authorities to arrest Tan.

"Wherever he is, we will try our best to get him back," Gutierrez told reporters. "We still don't know what passport he is using right now. We can have his Philippine passport cancelled."

Ruddock has had to fend off

questions over Tan's success in first getting an Australian business visa in 1998 and then

residency. He has acknowledged that Tan donated A\$10,000 to his party.

Ruddock said Interpol has been alerted to look out for Tan and the Australian federal police was in contact with its counterpart in the Philippines.

Ruddock has denied any impropriety in the granting of the visas to Tan and in his political donations.

Tan was charged before the Pasig City Regional Trial Court with fraud on Dec. 18, 2000 in connection with the Best World Resources stock manipulation scam. The court later issued three arrest

warrants against him. With Phillip C. Tubera; Reuters

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The Australian

7 June 2003

Please explain Mr Ruddock

PHILIP Ruddock has some serious explaining to do. Firstly, Bedweny Hbelche, who applied for refugee status, was rejected four times, including twice by the minister. An associate of the minister then made a donation to the Liberal Party's 2001 campaign on behalf of Hbelche. The minister grants him a permanent refugee visa. Secondly, a Buddhist temple in the minister's electorate made a donation of \$100,000 which the minister said he didn't know about. The temple was then granted an exceptionally high number of religious worker visas.

Thirdly, Dante Tan, wanted in the Philippines in connection with that country's largest insider trading scam. We now know Tan made a donation of \$10,000 to the minister's 2001 campaign. Around the time his business visa was cancelled, both he and the minister met on at least two occasions socially and dined together. One month after this donation, the department overturned its decision to cancel his visa. Tan was allowed to keep his business visa after a brief was prepared at the minister's request.

Either these donations made a difference to the minister's decision or he and his department made incorrect decisions at every other stage of the process.

Julia Gillard MP
Shadow Minister for
Immigration

IT'S unbelievable that immigration officers conducted only cursory checks and failed to discover the past history of the very high profile Dante Tan in Manila when assessing his application for citizenship. Ruddock's Philippines office would be the most reclusive, officious and cavalier of all his overseas establishments. The office is renowned for its deliberate bureaucratic bog, insensitivity, harshness and high rejection of visa applications for the most trivial of reasons. How convenient Tan squeezed through the process. Makes you wonder.

Clive Troy
Australia-Philippines Business
Council

Australia 29/8/2003

Bureaucrats 'block high-tech migrants'

Ellen Crosswell

U Recruitment

BUREAUCRATS are failing to implement federal immigration policies through hindering and sometimes preventing the entry of migrants with badly needed IT skills, an expert has warned.

The head of the country's largest visa and migration practice said extraordinary decisions were being made based on "ancient attitudes to industry needs".

"The Australian Government has developed entry policies that are quite cutting-edge internationally and quite effective in attracting people," PricewaterhouseCoopers visa and migration practice chief Brendan Ryan said.

Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock recently said skilled business migration schemes needed to be flexible so local businesses could cope with change and competition, particularly in the IT industry.

"The government has the ideas there, but often people are not implementing them as well as they should," Mr Ryan said. "I think a lot of that is not translating to a local decision-making level."

"It's not being followed by departmental offices."

Of particular concern were officials seeking "histories" for people in the e-commerce industry.

"They don't have that - it's a new industry," Mr Ryan said.

"It's so cutting edge that you can't have a history. I'm quite concerned at some of those decision-making processes."

Assessing experience and credentials was difficult because academic qualifications had not kept up with the IT industry, a spokesman for the immigration department said.

He denied public servants were out of step with government policy.

"Generally, we're looking for an assurance from the company that's doing the employing that the person has the skills," he said.



Concerned: Mr Ryan

lot of cases there are not academic qualifications to assess this. It's a general policy issue, not a mechanical issue.

"How do you measure a person's skill when there are no university qualifications for it?"

Mr Ryan said Australian migration policy was "well ahead" of other countries, including the United States which limits the number of work permits available each year.

"The US doesn't recognise de facto or same sex relationships which makes migrating with a partner extremely difficult," he said.

"Australia doesn't recognise same-sex relationships for temporary visas but it does for permanent visas."

"I think that's something that needs to be fixed."

The government must work more effectively with businesses to promote its view, he said.

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MISNET

Game Plan and Strategy for Meeting with PHILIP RUDDOCK

Time: Noon Monday 18th September 2000

I shall meet you at Hornsby Railway station at 11.40 am.

Please bring calling cards. We will probably have 20 minutes at the most.

The Minister is rather weary of the current criticism about the decisions and performance of his representative staff in Asia, so we will not belabour the point but concentrate on the positives and the need for understanding of the needs of Australian and Filipino companies involved in IT on a mutual basis.

I shall be advising the Minister that MISNET will be driving the PAD initiative (Phil Australian Dialog) on behalf of the Australian Philippine Business Council.

The major problem we need to tell the Minister is that the position is changing at lightening speed and the "system" just cannot accommodate realities.

The latest Government review should be finally concluded in November 2001, which is hardly appropriate.

What we need to offer the Minister is a **specific solution** to the IT industry problems.

By MISNET being the flagship of a trial many of the discomforts of the Department of Immigration will be dispelled.

Clive

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Page 1 of 3

From: "Chris"
Reply-To: "Chris" <ojward@anzcham.org>
Date: Wed, 16 Aug 2000 10:56:03 +0800
To: "Clive Troy" <clive@www.com>
Subject: MEETING WITH EMBASSY AND VISA ISSUES

Dear Clive,

Just a quick note to let you know how our meeting went yesterday afternoon with John Buckley and the others from the Embassy.

As I advised on the phone on Monday, we had originally some fun and games over agreeing to the Agenda. I have set out below the topics for the Agenda which the Board felt needed to be discussed in order to get things moving here on the trade relationship between Australia and the Philippines. The Agenda which we finally pushed is as follows.

MEETING BETWEEN ANZCHAM BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY STAFF

3.00 to 5.00 pm, 15 August 2000

AGENDA

- 1. Introduction by Bill Mason and John Buckley**
- 2. Outline of objectives of Australian Embassy in Manila**
- 3. Outline of objectives of Australian New Zealand Chamber of Commerce**
- 4. How does the Embassy propose moving ahead in developing the relationship between the Philippines and Australia after the agricultural products trade dispute**
- 5. How can we avoid a similar problem (to the agricultural products dispute) in the future**
- 6. Requirements for issuing of visas to business people and their staff
- possible arrangement with the Immigration section re Chamber members**
- 7. How can the business sector work closely with the Embassy in future**

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Page 2 of 3

8. Flow of information about visiting business people and government Ministers
9. Other matters
10. Next meeting

There was considerable opposition by Tony Melville (the number 2 at the Embassy - but he would not jump unless the Ambassador told him to) to the items numbered 4, 5, and 6 being included at all. Tony agreed to include #6 when the wording was changed from the original "Problems for issuing of visas etc." to "Requirements for issuing etc", but had originally termed the inclusion of these 3 items as being "negative" and not conducive for developing closer relationship because they only pointed to "problems". At the same time Tony insisted the meeting be scheduled for 1 hour instead of the 2 hours we had wanted.

We insisted that #4 and 5 be included and so Tony's answer was "I gave you our views on the agenda but clearly we're your guests and we'll happily listen to what you have to say." and so the Agenda went forward as above. Also, we pushed for the time to be 2 hours and they agreed to go with this. The program was to have the Ambassador (John Buckley), his deputy Tony Melville, First Secretary Trade Karen Gilmour, Senior Trade Commissioner Mark Visser and Trade Commissioner Kylie Bell with our 9 elected Board members (minus Keith and one other guy)

In the end, the Embassy came with the first 4 above plus, an AusAID rep, an Australian Federal Police rep, the principal Migration Officer, another Foreign Affairs officer, and the Senior Administration officer, in all an Embassy team of 9. So when it came to the item on the Embassy's Outline of objectives each and every one of the Embassy reps was being given a chance to talk about their program and so, 1 hour and 20 minutes later we finally got to have some say and pursue the questions/topics on the Agenda.

In regard to the #6 on the "Requirements for visas etc" we got this spiel about first being appointed by the Minister to be the representative of the Secretary of the Department to implement and carry out the requirements of the Act(s) covering Immigration. The Manila post processes 40,000 applications a year and issues 35,000 visas and does this within 3 days - much more than most other Embassies here and also much faster than the others. Australia has now a number of people applying for visas and then arriving in Australia and claiming refugee status and the Ambassador interjected that this costs Australian taxpayers \$40,000 for each one due to the benefits etc they receive. Occasionally in undertaking their duties, various applications get held up for processing and this should be taken in the light of the above statistics.

I advised that the issue really was not about people going to claim refugee status as the cases we cited each had been to Australia before, had legitimate business reasons to be travelling, and had the supporting documentation from their company in the Philippines and Australia. Again the defensive mechanism was up talking about the number of false documents received here, that people have gone to Australia before and then used this to set their "track record" before going a second time and then skipping etc. In the end, I was able to achieve some sort of agreement that if the Chamber has a member it knows and they give us some undertaking re their employee etc, and we pass this on will they accept this "endorsement"? The answer was we would be willing to have anything that will help us do our job. So, I cannot say that it was as positive as I would like but maybe a step in the right direction.

Overall, I felt the inclusion of the 9 Embassy staffers was a deliberate tactic to draw out the strategy area of the Agenda and then leave little time for the rest of the topics. This was supposed to be a discussion re the business area and I have a very bad suspicion that this was set up to avoid talking about the real issues in any depth, but I just hope I am wrong.

Well, I hope that the meetings with Keith and yourself (plus Neville Hughes and Gerry Lane) have gone well.

Until later

Kind regards
Chris

Peter Vitnell