

AUSTRALIA'S ROLE IN DEMOCRACY PROMOTION



Australian Institute of International Affairs

PUBLIC FORUM
Friday, 14th March, 2008

Final Report



centre for **democratic** institutions

This report summarises the outcomes of the half-day public forum on “*Australia’s Role in Democracy Promotion*” hosted by the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) and the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) in Canberra on 14 March 2008.

Highlights included:

- the involvement of 7 national and international experts as speakers and panelists as well as Tony Eggleton AO CVO as Chair;
- key-note presentations by the Hon Bob McMullan MP, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Senator Marise Payne, Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and Professor Benjamin Reilly, Director, Centre for Democratic Institutions;
- public presentations by representatives from Australian Labor Party, Liberal Party of Australia, Australian Electoral Commission, and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- a total of 95 high quality participants, including from embassies, government, non-government organizations and academics;
- positive feedback from participants with over 90% reporting that their expectations had been exceeded or met and a similar number reporting that they were impressed with the quality and depth of the discussions;
- policy results including announcement of a review of Australia’s democracy assistance programs.

The forum identified and brought together the range of actors - parliamentarians, government officials, political parties and independent bodies - engaged in promoting and enhancing democracy abroad to discuss Australia’s role in democracy promotion both in Australia and overseas.



The Hon Bob McMullan MP

The forum discussed the range of issues surrounding Australia’s distinctive approach to democracy promotion compared to the approach of both the United States and Europe as well as activities and approaches of Australian political parties and government agencies tasked to promote democracy in our region and further field.

Attendees

The public forum was attended by 95 participants including representatives from:

- *parliament* (e.g., Queensland Parliament, West Australia Parliament, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Australian Parliamentary Library)
- *government* (e.g., Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Agency for International Development, Department of Defence, Australian Electoral Commission, Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Old Parliament House, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy);
- *embassies and high commissions* (e.g., France, Indonesia, Mexico, Argentina, Malaysia, UK, Hungary)
- *non-government* (e.g., World Vision Australia, Australian Reproductive Health Alliance, Oxfam);
- *academics and students* from Universities all over the country (e.g., Australian National University, Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, Australian Defence Force Academy);

Feedback and Results

Over 90% of participants rated the public forum overall as very good or excellent while 88% rated the relevance and quality of presentations. Comments included:

- “Increased understanding of politics both within Australia and overseas”
- “Challenges and achievements to date are clearer”
- “All the speakers were excellent”



Prof Benjamin Reilly, The Hon Bob McMullan MP and Senator Marise Payne



Tony Eggleton AO CVO, Melissa H Conley Tyler and The Hon Bob McMullan MP

The Hon Bob McMullan MP announced a review of Australia’s programs for democracy assistance and congratulated the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) and the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) on the forum and agreed to “feed what comes out of this in the review of what we’re doing.”

Following the forum, various meetings were arranged between forum participants to discuss how best to coordinate comfort. It is expected that this will lead to improved inter-agency co-operation.