



THE FAWCETT FLYER

FEBRUARY 2020



This February, Parliament returned for 2020. All but one of February's four weeks were joint sitting weeks, resulting in a busy month for both Houses of Parliament.

One topic which continues to spark public discussion is the novel coronavirus. The Government is working hard to ensure actions taken are effective in containing the virus and protecting Australians, both here and overseas. Based on expert health advice, the Government has initiated the implementation of the Coronavirus Emergency Response Plan. The temporary ban has been extended for an extra fortnight for foreign nationals who have been in mainland China from entering Australia for 14 days following their stay. At the time of writing, the Government's travel advice for mainland China remains at "Do not travel". Australians evacuated from Wuhan are now being relocated back to their homes in Australia following their two weeks on Christmas Island, to ensure their health during the 14 day incubation period. This month, \$2 million in funding was also fast-tracked from the Medical Research Future Fund to support Australian researchers to understand and respond to the coronavirus outbreak.

With coronavirus alarm continuing, several positive developments have flown under the radar. ABS data revealed that the proportion of working-age Australians receiving welfare benefits has fallen to its lowest level in more than 30 years, and more Australians are in jobs than ever before – a record high of 12,995,400 in January. Only 13.5% of the working-age population were receiving income support payments at June 2019. A decade prior, this figure was 17.2%. We have created 1,505,400 jobs since our Government came to office in 2013 – an increase of 13.1%, the majority of which has been full-time positions. Our plan to provide more pathways from welfare to employment is working.

I would also like to welcome new South Australian Liberal Senator Andrew McLachlan, who was sworn in this month to the Federal Senate. I look forward to working alongside him in the future.

For more information about any of the topics in February's Fawcett Flyer or other matters of a federal nature, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Kind regards,

SENATOR DAVID FAWCETT



CREATING OPPORTUNITIES 2 THROUGH FREE TRADE

As of February 12th, the Peru-Australia Free Trade Agreement (PAFTA) entered into force. Australian businesses now have improved access to Peru, one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America over the last decade.

This FTA will build on Australia's existing two-way trade relationship with Peru – worth \$656 million in 2018/19. Australian producers of sugar, grains, beef and sheep meat and dairy will benefit from the elimination of more than 99% of tariffs within 5 years. Australian sugar exporters now have duty free access for 30,000 tonnes a year – the most any sugar exporting country has achieved into Peru in two decades – and dairy farmers now benefit from zero tariffs locked-in on 7,000 tonnes.

At 11pm on January 31, the United Kingdom formally withdrew from the European Union as Brexit was finally realised. As Brexit progressed, the Australian Government has been in discussion with both the EU and UK to ensure that trade agreements could be finalised with greater ease when Brexit was complete, and negotiations are ongoing.

While the conditions of Brexit were



still being negotiated in August of 2019, I met with UK Secretary of State for International Trade the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP to discuss ongoing progress during her visit to Australia (*pictured*). I met with the Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, UK Foreign Secretary, this month and there was a lot greater clarity regarding trade between our two nations, following Brexit's confirmation.

The Federal Liberal Government has a plan to ensure around 90% of Australia's trade is covered by FTAs by 2022, giving all Australian businesses the opportunity to be competitive in the world market.

For more information on PAFTA, click [here](#) or use the QR Code below.



NEW NATIONAL COMMISSIONER AND SUPPORT FOR VETERANS



Announced this month, the National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention, supported by the work of the Veteran Family Advocate, will provide the Government with the additional evidence and expert insight needed to improve our support measures for those Australian veterans and their families who need help during, or following, their service.

Once appointed, the Commissioner's first action will be an independent review – with the powers of a Royal Commission – of the 419 suicides by veterans which occurred between 2001 and 2017. An initial \$40 million will be invested to support the Commissioner's work and will be expanded to ensure they have whatever resources they need.

Having entered politics following a 20+ year Australian Army career, I joined Prime Minister Scott Morrison at the announcement, alongside veterans Phillip Thompson MP, Vince Connelly MP, Senator Jim Molan, Gavin Pearce MP and Andrew Hastie MP (*pictured*).

Also announced this month, an additional \$4.8 million will be invested to ensure each new veteran leaving the ADF deemed to be at-risk will receive personal support through the Coordinated Client Support program – funding 10 additional case coordinators to provide personal support to as many as 170 extra veterans each year. \$5.6 million was also announced to grow the Personalised Career Employment Program to cater for another 1,600 ADF members each year, specifically for career development and job placement support as they transition back into civilian life.

For the first time ever, in 2021, the Census will contain a question asking if each individual is a veteran. Historically, not all those who have served in the ADF have utilised Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) support, making it difficult to establish how many veterans are in Australia, where they live, and what additional services are needed in specific areas. This is an important development as it allows the DVA

to gather accurate information, particularly for the large proportion of veterans who are currently unknown to the Department.

Our Government invests a record \$11 billion to support 280,000 veterans and their families each year, is reforming the DVA with more work underway, and has cut

waiting times for claims, among other initiatives.

For more on the new National Commissioner, click [here](#) or use the QR Code below.



RADIOACTIVE WASTE FACILITY SET FOR NAPANDEE

Announced in February following 4 years of consultation and consideration of more than 30 sites, the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility Taskforce chose Napandee, SA to be the site of the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility.

Extensive community consultation was undertaken and the final location – 160 hectares at Napandee, just outside of Kimba – was supported by 61.6% of the residents. The region will now benefit from the construction project worth hundreds of millions of dollars, 45 permanent jobs when completed, and a \$31 million support package.

The new facility will bring together waste, currently spread over more than 100 locations across the country and accumulated over approximately 60 years. Constructing a purpose-built facility

to house the waste in a single location for continual monitoring is in line with Government policy and international best practice.

The facility will be capable of permanently disposing of low-level waste and temporarily storing intermediate-level waste for decades, while the location of a separate intermediate-level waste disposal facility is identified and constructed. Approximately 80% of Australia's radioactive waste is associated with production of nuclear medicine which, on average, one in two Australians will need during their life. For more information on the Government's management of radioactive waste, click [here](#) or use the QR Code below.





PALAU PROSPERS FROM AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT

The Republic of Palau is the next stop on the Fawcett Flyer tour through the Pacific region – a valued neighbour and beneficiary of Australia’s ongoing support. Located approximately 900 kilometres east of the Philippines, the country’s population of 18,000 live on just eight of the approximately 340 islands in the tightly clustered archipelago.

Palau’s economy is primarily dependent on tourism – taking advantage of the country’s reputation for pristine marine environments, sea life and dive sites – followed by subsistence agriculture, fishing and foreign aid. With no domestic currency or central bank, Palau’s economy functions through the US Dollar, despite gaining independence from

the United States in 1994.

Australia’s commitment to a mutually beneficial relationship with Palau was recently strengthened with the establishment of an Australian embassy in Palau’s commercial centre, Koror, which became operational in December 2019.

The last high-level Australian visit was then Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Warren Truss MP in July 2014, who attended the 45th Pacific Islands Forum held in Palau.

A vital part of Australia’s relationship with Palau includes our bilateral aid program. Australia’s aid program in the North Pacific focusses on Palau, in addition to the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The Federal

Liberal Government will provide an estimated \$8.4 million in Official Development Assistance to the North Pacific this financial year.

The aid program in Palau currently focusses on two strategic objectives: improving telecommunications and internet coverage, as well as achieving gender equality and enhancing female empowerment. These two areas have been identified as having significant potential to contribute further to economic growth and social stability in Palau.

Between 2012 and 2017, Australia contributed to the permanent removal of 18,736 pieces of unexploded ordnance (more than 40 tonnes) from two of Palau's major islands Koror and Peleliu – a product of World War II's Battle of Peleliu. This freeing up of land and marine areas enabled Palau locals to use them for infrastructure, agriculture, housing, tourism and community use.

One of Australia's current priorities is the reform of Palau's ICT sector and to increase access to high quality, low-cost internet services. Australia has provided technical assistance to reform the Palau National Communication Corporation and the Belau Submarine Cable Corporation, promoted private sector participation in the ICT sector, and enabled greater competition in

the market.

Australia's Palau Country Plan for the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program aims to foster the economic empowerment of women, increase the participation of women in public life and decision making, and reduce the incidence of gender-based violence.

Under our Pacific Maritime Security Program's Pacific Patrol Boat Replacement Program, Palau is one of twelve nations to receive a Guardian Class Patrol Boat.

Australia's support through the delivery of 21 Patrol Boats will strengthen the region's capability to respond to issues such as fisheries protection, trans-national crime, regional security, and search and rescue operations.

This is especially important considering the international pressure Palau has faced from China, following Palau's refusal to reject diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

For more on Australia's support for our Palauan neighbours, click [here](#) or scan the QR Code below.



LAND121 LIFTS DEFENCE CAPABILITY



Project Overlander – LAND 121 Phases 3B and 5B – achieved Initial Operating Capability this month, and will now be used in ADF training and major exercises before Final Operating Capability is achieved. The Federal Liberal Government's \$5 billion investment in Army's next generation logistic vehicle fleet replaces the current medium, heavy and semi-trailer vehicles that have been operational for more than 3 decades. Under Project Overlander, 3,751 vehicles, 4,730 modules and 2,565 trailers are to be delivered across the ADF.

Adelaide's own Supashock contributed their expertise and parts to Phase 5B, supporting lead contractor Rheinmetall Australia. I attended the official opening of their new Holden Hill facility in August last year (*pictured*).

The new fleet – with an initial rollout of vehicles already in use – has provided enhanced support for a range of Defence operations in Australia, including the 2019

Townsville floods response and 2019/20 Operation Bushfire Assist, as well as supporting our Pacific neighbours for both security operations and partnered exercises.

In late March, the LAND 400 Phase 3 Mounted Close Combat Capability Roadshow event will be held in Adelaide. The roadshow enables local small businesses – both current defence industry businesses and those new to the sector – to pitch their capabilities to the project's shortlisted tenderers, Hanwha and Rheinmetall. Showcasing the wide array of expertise and capability present across Australia, the national roadshow will also develop local supply chains and maximise the opportunities for Australian industry participation.

For more information on Project Overlander, click [here](#) or use the QR Code below.



COMMITTEE UPDATE

With the Parliament resuming in February, committee activities also gain momentum.

As Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT), a significant portion of the committee's work over the short term will be focussed on Australia's bond with our neighbours in the Pacific Islands.

Four separate inquiries in various stages of completion relate to different elements of Australia's Pacific activities including trade, investment, defence and security, as well as a new inquiry which will explore the human rights of the Pacific Islands' women and girls.

As profiled in the final edition of the Fawcett Flyer for 2019, JSCFADT is currently considering the implications of Australia adopting legal measures to impose domestic sanctions upon individuals who commit gross human rights abuses – one possibility is a US-style 'Magnitsky Act'. Submissions to this inquiry for Australian stakeholders close in early March.

In my role as JSCFADT Chair, I also met with the UK Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Dominic Raab this month

where we discussed the partnership of our two nations following Brexit. *(See Page 9 for photo)*

As a member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee of Intelligence and Security (PJICIS), the committee has continued its public hearings into its review of Mandatory Data Retention. The review is expected to be completed by mid-April.

Two inquiries into Press Freedom and Seismic Testing have been the focus of the Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications.

For the Committee's Inquiry into Press Freedom, a report is due to be completed by 16th March. Public hearings continue for the Inquiry into the Impact of Seismic Testing, with a hearing to be held in Gosford, NSW in mid-March.

To follow the work of any Parliamentary Committee, click [here](#) or scan the QR code below.



9 OUT AND ABOUT



As Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, I met with the UK Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Dominic Raab (*centre*) this month where we discussed the partnership of our two nations following Brexit.



SBS hosted an event in Parliament this month to preview their year ahead and introduce the Australian representative to the 2020 Eurovision Song Contest, Montaigne. I took the opportunity to speak with SBS news presenter, Anton Enus.



81 year old, Bill Hatfield became the oldest person in the world to sail solo, unassisted and non-stop around the world in February, completing the journey in 259 days. My colleague Angie Bell MP was on hand at Southport, Queensland to present Bill with a certificate from Senator Richard Colbeck, Minister for Sport and Senior Australians.



I joined the Prime Minister at this month's announcement of the new National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention, alongside government colleagues who have also served in the ADF. (*More on Page 3*)



As JSCFADT Chair, I met with a delegation from the German Bundestag led by Volkmar Klein MdB to discuss a broad range of issues spanning the Australia-EU trade agreement, security and strategic issues in the Indo-Pacific region.

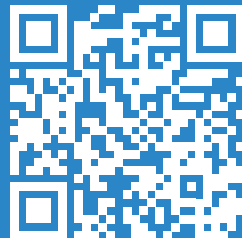


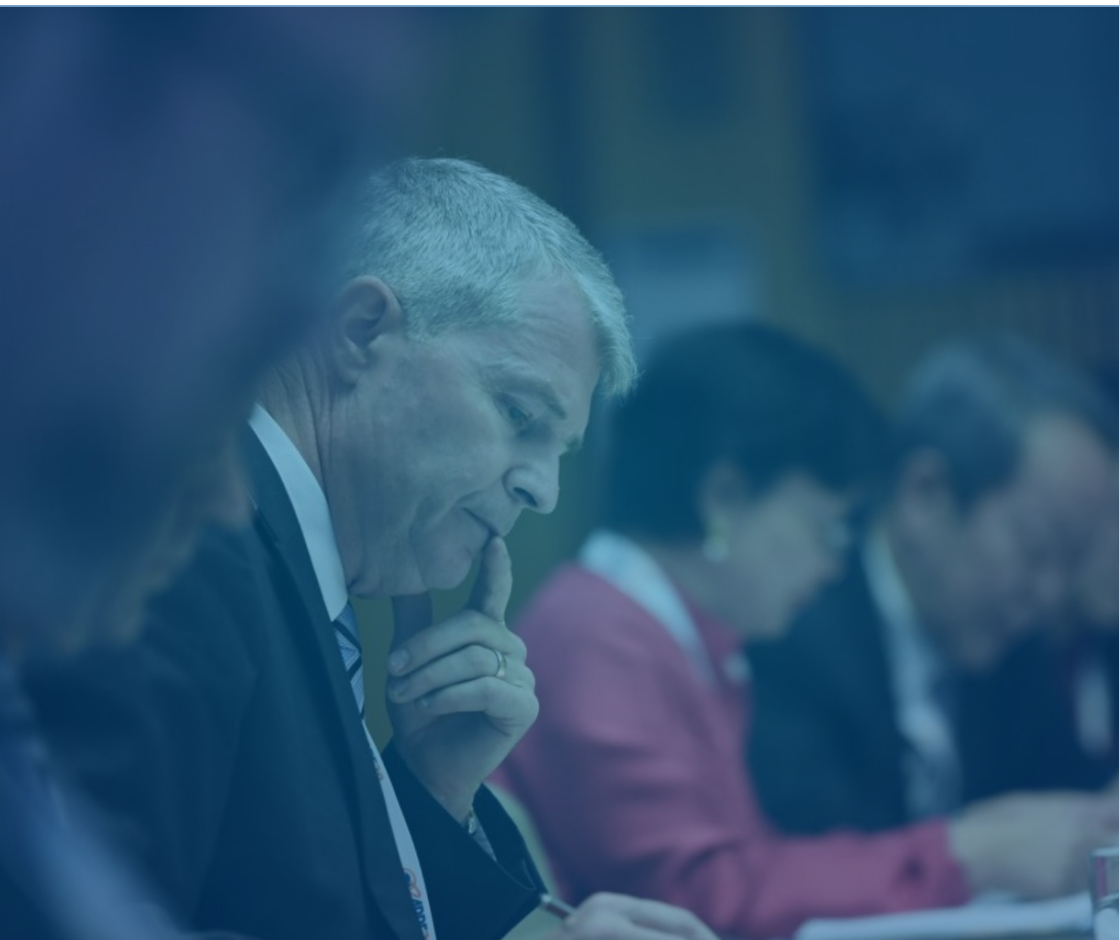
I welcomed an EU parliamentary delegation to Australia, in my role as JSCFADT Chair. Discussions included Australia's ongoing negotiations with the EU regarding a Free Trade Agreement. The delegation's visit continues the remarkable record of 41 years of annual exchanges between the European Parliament and the Australian Parliament.



This month, I met with His Excellency Mr Christophe Penot, French Ambassador to Australia.

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