



# THE FAWCETT FLYER

MARCH-MAY 2020



The world has changed in significant ways, since the last edition of the *Fawcett Flyer*. Nations have closed their borders, some businesses have had to reduce capacity or even close their doors, and individuals have been asked to stay at home as much as possible, all to combat the deadly Coronavirus (COVID-19).

While restrictions across Australia are beginning to ease – currently at Stage 1 of 3, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic has created long lasting health and economic issues which the Government is taking steps to resolve.

The health response in Australia, and South Australia in particular, has been effective, timely and proportional. Australia has one of the highest testing rates in the world, and South Australia has the highest testing rate within Australia, so we are well placed to understand the spread and health impact within our communities.

An expanded testing regime is currently underway in SA so please seek a test if you currently have or recently had any symptoms, no matter how mild. Symptoms include fever or chills in the absence of an alternative illness; an unexplained acute respiratory infection including sore throat, cough or shortness of breath; loss of smell or the alteration in the sense of taste.

The COVID-19 virus has put the brakes on many industries and institutions, and the Parliament of Australia has also felt the impact, including the postponement of the 2020/21 Federal Budget to October. While Parliamentary business—as scheduled—was not able to proceed between early March and May, the Government ensured that all the financial support measures for affected Australians were legislated via Parliamentary sessions with reduced quorum. This month saw the first “normal” sitting of the Parliament albeit with many staff working remotely and social distancing enforced within the Parliament itself.

Parliamentary Committees have continued to operate with much of the work going online, allowing ongoing scrutiny of Government and inquiry into issues of concern. In particular the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) has commenced a new Inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on Australia’s Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade policies. As Chair of JSCFADT, I am looking forward to the Committee receiving evidence from a range of experts to examine how Australia can balance the risks and opportunities presented by global connectivity in trade and security partnerships and respond to

threats to the rules-based order that have emerged. For an update on the progress of Committees that I am involved in, see *Page 3*.

Before the full economic impact of the Coronavirus became clear, Australia was recognised by the OECD as well positioned to weather a then-potential COVID-19 financial storm. The Government's swift response, in both health and finance, ensured our nation maintained its AAA credit rating with ratings agency Standard and Poor (S&P). S&P noted that, "*while fiscal stimulus measures will... weigh heavily on public finances in the immediate future, they won't structurally weaken Australia's fiscal position.*"

As we begin to chart a course out of this pandemic, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected Australia will rebound quickly. While the IMF projected economic growth to fall by 6.7% in 2020, Australia is forecast to grow by 6.1% in 2021 – quicker than the US, Canada, Japan, France, Germany and the UK. More detail on the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is available on *Page 7*.

The economic stability created by infrastructure projects, defence and space industry provides a strong foundation for the SA economy, which will enable a speedier economic recovery. More on the recent encouraging developments within SA's defence industry has been compiled on *Page 9*.

ANZAC Day commemorations this year were also affected by COVID-19, with public gatherings prohibited. However, it was encouraging to see the amount of Australians who didn't let the day pass without honouring the men and women who served in defence of our country – many who paid the ultimate price for us to live in liberty. I hope these creative and personal methods of reflection continue long after we can gather again to commemorate ANZAC Day.

For more information about any of these topics or other matters of a federal nature, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Kind regards,

**SENATOR  
DAVID FAWCETT**





## COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Coronavirus has substantially changed the format of Committee work, but Committee work continues nevertheless.

With the assistance of video and teleconferencing to replace in-person commitments, the committees I am involved in are regularly meeting and advancing Inquiries within their fields as we would be outside of these unique circumstances.

In my role as Chair of JSCFADT, I've been involved in the Human Rights Sub-Committee consideration of whether Australia should adopt legal measures to impose domestic, targeted sanctions upon individuals who commit gross human rights abuses. One possible outcome is that Australia enacts legislation comparable to the US's Global Magnitsky Act. Submissions to this Inquiry are still being accepted, and public hearings commenced on

31st March via teleconference and have continued since.

The public hearings provided an opportunity for the Human Rights Sub-Committee to hear from human rights advocates and community groups. These groups included the Human Rights Network of Australia, representatives from the Uyghur Association of Victoria, and representatives from Victoria's HongKongers Association. Stakeholders of this Inquiry expressed a desire to see it continue, highlighting the impact human rights abuses have had on their communities.

In May, JSCFADT has also launched a new Inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on Australia's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade policies. In preparation for this Inquiry, Committee members received briefings from experts on industry resilience and supply chain security.

COVID-19 has removed any doubt that the efficient and effective functioning of some critical systems are reliant on the integrity of supply chains which we currently do not control and which may be subject to disruption.

The Committee will consider the need for a systemic approach to identifying and managing risk to ensure that Australia has resilience across key enablers such as our health, transport, and food sectors as well as defence.

Other JSCFADT Inquiries include several to concentrate on Australia's relationship with our neighbours in the Pacific region through trade, defence engagement and the empowerment of girls and women, throughout the region. Due to the circumstances, submissions are still being accepted for all of these inquiries.

Through its review function mandated under section 29 of the Intelligence Services Act 2001, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) is carrying on with business as usual. On 12th March, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton MP requested PJCIS review the effectiveness of the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (International Production Orders) Bill 2020.

In developing this Bill, the Government conducted consultations with relevant stakeholders including Federal, State and Territory agencies, the US Government, and targeted industry stakeholders. Submissions made to the Committee will be reviewed and considered over the coming weeks.

The Committee will also be considering an ASIO amendment bill regarding the detention and questioning powers available to Australia's key internal intelligence agency.

As Chair of the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee, work continues with three reports finalised and tabled in April. However, several public hearings which were scheduled for March had to be postponed. Submissions are being accepted on the Inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Climate Trigger) Bill 2020, until May 21st.

For more information on work being done by a Parliamentary Committee, click [here](#) or scan the QR Code below.





## AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT VITAL DURING TRYING TIMES

While Australians have been adversely affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic, our Pacific Island neighbours have fewer resources at their disposal to rely on during this time of need. As good neighbours do, Australia has increased or maintained our support to our regional neighbours on several fronts.

Experiencing the double blows of COVID-19 and Cyclone Harold created a significant need in Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Fiji and Australia has responded. After the Category 5 cyclone, Harold devastated the nation over the Easter Long Weekend, supplies were delivered to the northern islands of Vanuatu. Shelter kits, hygiene kits, water containers, blankets and lanterns have been

distributed by the ADF – alongside support to policing, health, NGO and education support. Australia also provided support to Solomon Islands for its clean-up, and assisted Fiji with a support package including emergency supplies, as well as funding for the Fijian Red Cross and other NGOs. These organisations are helping rebuild infrastructure, ensure safe access to water and sanitation and provide counselling support.

Urgent medical supplies have been delivered from Australia to Pacific Island nations to help prevent outbreaks of COVID-19, alongside staple food and humanitarian supplies to those suffering due to current restraints (pictured, above). Local COVID-19 testing services and public information campaigns



have also been launched, supporting efforts to strengthen food security and the capacity of island healthcare systems.

Our closest neighbours to the north, Papua New Guinea, are being significantly affected by this virus and Australia has agreed to defer loan repayments from PNG until the end of 2020, allowing them valuable time to get on top of their outbreak.

To expedite the provision of emergency relief supplies and services, on April 7, members of the Pacific Islands Forum established the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway for the Pacific (PHP-C). The PHP-C will serve as a platform through which regional responses to security issues can now be promptly considered and coordinated.

Despite an increased demand for emergency relief supplies throughout the region, existing operations including Operation Solania continue to provide stability and security. Australia's Operation Solania was launched in August 2019, as part of a wider multi-national program for marine surveillance in the Pacific to crack-down on illegal fishing.

Through Solania, ADF personnel partner with the Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) in the

fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the Southwest Pacific. One of 13 nations to take part, our ADF contributed a C-27J Spartan (medium turboprop transport aircraft), a B300 King Air (twin-engine turboprop aircraft) and HMAS Maryborough (Armidale Class patrol boat) – providing both air and sea support to detect and deter unlawful operations. During this deployment which was the first of 2020, approximately 14.1 million square kilometres were covered, resulting in 108 sightings and 24 boardings. The fishing industry is a main source of revenue for Pacific Island nations. Overfishing damages long-term sustainability of local fishing stocks and contributes to greater environmental impacts. Australia has marked more than 40 years of contribution to strengthening capacity in fisheries management, throughout the Pacific Islands.

Australia continues its work with Pacific Island nations to enhance regional security, deliver humanitarian support, and assist our regional neighbours to recover from the effects of COVID-19. For more information on this, click [here](#) or scan the QR Code below.



# AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT LEADS THE WORLD IN COVID RESPONSE



\*Photo taken prior to COVID-19 pandemic

As we face the challenge of the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19), the Australian Government's first priority has been the health and safety of all Australians.

The Government's \$2.4 billion COVID-19 Health Plan, alongside Australians' collective co-operation in social distancing where possible, has enabled measured success in flattening the curve of COVID-19, without the extreme restrictions seen overseas.

I would like to thank everyone who has taken the advice of Australia's health experts and adhered to social distancing guidelines to help protect those who are vulnerable in our community.

In early March, the Government unveiled the health plan to provide support across primary care, aged

care, hospitals, research and the national medical stockpile. This timely delivery prioritised a preventative approach across Australia, offering targeted support for those most susceptible to contracting COVID-19.

This package also included a national communications campaign to make all Australians aware of the potential risks and combat misinformation, which was rife on social media.

Following this, \$1.1 billion in additional funding for mental health services, domestic violence support and emergency food relief were delivered, alongside a record Medicare-subsidised expansion of telehealth services – allowing everyone to access medical assistance from home.



With these health reforms, travel restrictions and social distancing measures continuing to eliminate community transmission, the economic impact of COVID-19 is profound.

The Australian Government's economic response to the Coronavirus totals approximately \$320 billion across forward estimates.

Following two economic stimulus packages which totalled \$83.6 billion, our Government released the nation's largest-ever stimulus through the \$130 billion JobKeeper program on April 8th – purpose-built to save millions of Australian jobs and keep workers connected to their employer, enabling the economy to bounce back quickly as restrictions begin to ease.

In conjunction with the temporary social security system changes through the JobSeeker payment and Coronavirus Supplement announced in the first two support tranches, the Government's economic response sought to provide some support for every affected Australian.

The stimulus packages also include access to credit and supports for the cash-flow needs of small and medium-sized businesses, temporary moratorium

arrangements on evictions, increased access to superannuation and a lower deeming rate for retirees.

The Government's response has been generally well-received by the business community, and is achieving its purpose.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted business surveys which revealed approximately 40% of Australian businesses say JobKeeper influenced their decision to keep on staff through the COVID-19 crisis.

The report also showed that 60% of companies had enrolled or intended to enrol in JobKeeper.

Australia's strong economic position, prior to the pandemic, has enabled the flexibility required for an effective response to COVID-19.

For more information on the Government's response to COVID-19, including health advice, financial support, as well as links to South Australian guidelines as they're updated, click [here](#) or scan the QR Code below.



## 9 DEFENCE INDUSTRY WEATHERS COVID-19 ECONOMIC STORM

Despite the health and economic crises enveloping Australia and the rest of the globe, specific industries and sectors have remained largely unaffected or even experienced an increase in demand, creating and sustaining employment in a time of instability. The defence industry, which has experienced significant growth under Liberal Governments both State and Federal, is one such industry.

Adelaide-based businesses XTek and Axiom Precision Manufacturing have continued to operate with strength, following announcements of contract success. XTek have had a twin success over the last two months – confirming the first commercial order to be produced in their recently opened facility in Elizabeth, supplying an Australian specialist law enforcement unit with ballistic armour plates; and a Sovereign Industrial Capability Priority (SICP) grant worth \$830,000 which will enable them to increase their capacity to locally produce lightweight ballistic combat helmets.

The Federal Liberal Government is engaging with Australian manufacturers, like Axiom, to provide expanded sovereign manufacturing capability to the

health sector. Axiom has utilised the expertise of defence engineers to produce medical personal protective equipment (PPE), during this period of increased demand. Important products such as PPE can be manufactured through existing



supply chains which minimises production time and costs.

Axiom is currently working with Defence to produce face shields for Australian health workers (*pictured*). Designed by Defence Science and Technology Group, 600 face shields have already been manufactured and are on their way to Australian hospitals and medical facilities.

The Australian Government's \$90 billion Naval Shipbuilding Plan remains a priority and continues to generate and sustain much-needed local jobs. The Osborne Naval Shipyard has recently played host

to two milestones in the Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) program. In April, the hull of Australia's first Arafura Class OPV was joined in a significant feat of engineering. For the OPV build, the two halves of the hull are constructed separately before the megablocks are joined and welded together, creating the completed hull (*pictured*). The keel of the second OPV was laid – a



milestone event which is always celebrated in the building of a naval vessel. Progress continues for the two OPV's, and I look forward to the imminent commencement of the Hunter Class Frigate build at Osborne.

As the third and final Air Warfare Destroyer (AWD) was completed and handed over to the Royal Australian Navy in March – marking the end of the AWD program – the focus now turns to the Hunter Class Frigates. Construction on the Outfitting and Ship Erection Hall at the Osborne Naval Shipyard is nearing completion, which will be where the Hunter Class Frigates will be built.

Former AWD shipbuilders are

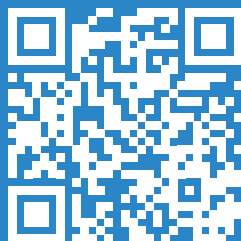
now preparing for the new Frigate build utilising Australia's first digital shipbuilding course, designed by BAE Systems Australia in partnership with ASC and Flinders University. More than 60 workers are enrolled to complete the Diploma of Digital Technology program, jointly funded by Australian and SA Governments.

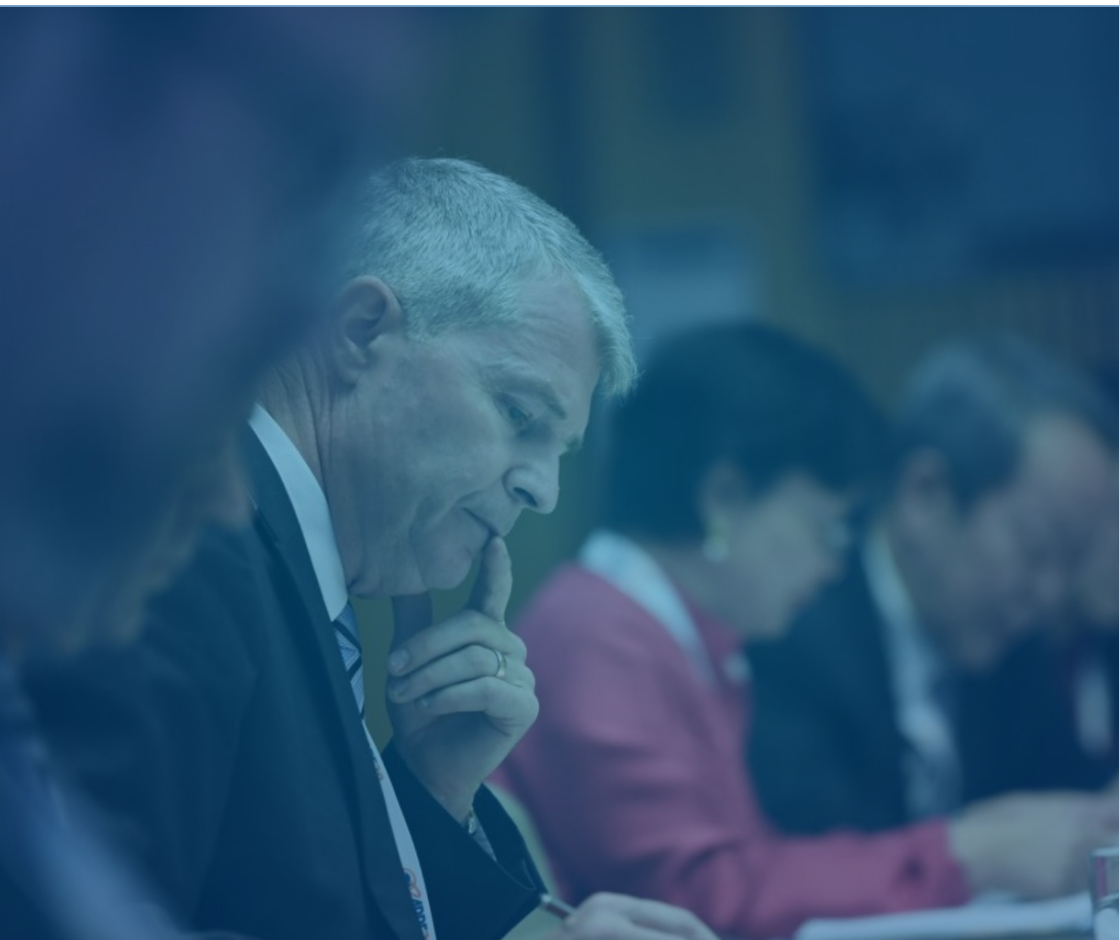
Also, hundreds of job opportunities were available to skilled workers who lost their job due to COVID-19 – with experience in manufacturing, aviation, tourism, or hospitality – at ongoing naval defence projects in SA.

The Naval Shipbuilding College confirmed open positions included logistics support, design, drafting, project management, and engineering. Virtual training courses are also being offered to those who require upskilling, to ensure successful applicants are skilled and ready to work.

Keep up to date on announcements, like these and others, via Facebook:

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Senator for South Australia

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