



THE FAWCETT FLYER

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023



As we approach the Christmas season, our desire to see “peace on earth, goodwill towards men” is confounded by tragic reminders—in Ukraine, the Middle East and Myanmar, to name a few—that the world does not currently enjoy such peace. Reflecting on this should make us grateful for the stability, freedom, prosperity and safety that we enjoy in a plural, liberal democracy such as Australia. It is certainly what motivates my work to ensure that our nation continues to be free, peaceful and prosperous.

In Australia, too, however, the reality is that many people are struggling with the cost of living as we head into the festive season—with the ever-rising cost of fuel, electricity, gas and food, among other essentials. This is what I am hearing from constituents who contact my office and through phone surveys. The Coalition will continue to hold the Government to account for its decisions and seek better policy outcomes that will provide relief to battling Australian households and businesses.

In this condensed end-of-year edition of the Fawcett Flyer, I have provided a brief update on my various committee-related engagements over the past month and a half, including the release of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade’s report on my private senator’s bill, the Defence Capability Assurance and Oversight Bill 2023. At a later date, I will provide further details regarding the Coalition’s dissenting report and the progress of the bill in the Senate.

Additionally, I have shared some information on my work around defence and national security, including links to several recent speeches on the topic, which can be found online.

Finally, I have covered the latest developments on the nuclear energy front—particularly in light of the COP28 Summit in Dubai, where the crucial role that nuclear energy must play in the transition towards net zero has been an important focus.

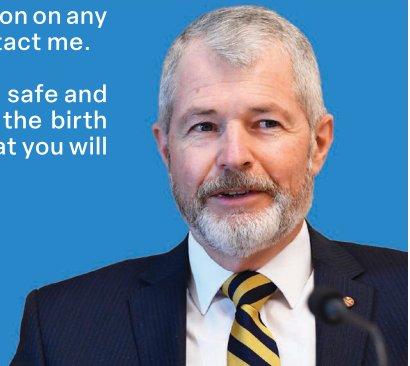
Because of ongoing conflict globally, it has been a busy month and a half in the Senate, with departmental briefings and meetings with foreign delegations to see how we can best respond to an evolving situation. I have also continued engaging with stakeholders on other foreign affairs, defence and national security, and religious freedom and education matters.

As always, if you would like further information on any aspects of my work, please feel free to contact me.

I wish each of you and your families a merry, safe and blessed Christmas break as you celebrate the birth of Christ with your loved ones, and I trust that you will have a fruitful New Year.

Kind regards,

**SENATOR THE HON
DAVID FAWCETT**



Current Committee Service:

Deputy Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Member, Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Member, Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Member, Senate Standing Committee on Privileges

COMMITTEE WORK

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A great deal has transpired on the committee front since October, including new inquiries, tabled reports, a supplementary budget estimates hearing and a public committee hearing. There have also been numerous engagements with foreign delegations and individuals—and briefings—on matters concerning the international situation.

Tabled Reports:

On 16 November, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) tabled the report on our “Inquiry into supporting democracy in our region”. You can read the full report by scanning the code.



On 24 November, the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (SSCFADT) legislation committee tabled its report on its inquiry into my private senator’s bill, the “Defence Capability Assurance and Oversight Bill 2023”.

Despite the evidence of all witnesses (except for Defence), who supported the passage of the Bill with amendments to improve Defence capability, Government senators chose to recommend that the Bill not be passed. Coalition committee members released a dissenting report, which can also be found on the Parliamentary website.

I have since moved the Bill to its second reading debate, and it will be voted on in the New Year.

**New Inquiries:**

Since October, a new inquiry has been referred to the SSCFADT on the “Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Bill 2023 [Provisions]” and “Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety (Transitional Provisions) Bill 2023 [Provisions]”. Submissions will close on 1 February 2024 and the committee will report back on 26 April 2024.



On 30 November, the SSCFADT also began accepting submissions for its “Inquiry into the Defence Trade Controls Amendment Bill 2023 [Provisions]”. Both of these inquiries are important oversight measures for AUKUS-related legislation.

**Hearings:**

In the month of November, I attended a session of supplementary budget estimates relating to veterans’ affairs. The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties also held a public hearing regarding the second, trade-related pillar of AUKUS.

Other Activity:

There has been continued interest in my proposed strategy for better provision of healthcare to Pacific Island nations.

You can read a strategic brief I wrote on the topic by scanning the code:



3 DEFENCE UPDATE



Since the last edition of the Fawcett Flyer, I have continued to engage widely with a range of stakeholders to advocate for better Defence and Defence Industry policy to ensure the safety and security of our nation.

I have also raised a number of Defence-related matters in parliament recently.

During question time in early November, I asked Senator Don Farrell about the Hunter-class frigate program in Adelaide and challenged him on the Government's delayed response to the Surface Fleet Review and the lack of new funding to Defence as well as the ongoing delays to Defence projects.

Unfortunately, however, instead of engaging with my questions, Labor continues to perpetrate the myth that the Coalition was bad for Defence while they are good for Defence.

Following my exchange with Senator Farrell, I responded to the Government's misleading rhetoric by contrasting the strong record of the Coalition on Defence with Labor's mismanagement of Defence policy over the past eighteen months.



I also addressed a Matter of Public Importance in the Senate regarding the Australian Defence Force's challenges meeting recruitment and retention targets.

I argued that the poor Defence decisions and management of the Albanese Labor Government has only exacerbated an already difficult problem.

You can watch both exchanges online:





Australia is increasingly out of alignment with the rest of the world when it comes to next-generation nuclear energy.

At the COP28 conference recently, French President Emmanuel Macron called on Australia to lift our ban on civil nuclear energy, stating that the technology is “necessary to succeed for carbon neutrality in 2050”.

Simultaneously, more than twenty nations—including the US, Canada, France, Japan, the UAE and Britain—pledged to triple nuclear energy capacity worldwide by 2050.

Sweden, meanwhile, aims for a “massive expansion of new nuclear power”—probably the equivalent of ten large-scale reactors—by 2045.

In mid-November, the Philippines signed a nuclear energy accord with the US—allowing for the transfer of civil nuclear energy-related materials and components.

Like Australia, the Philippines does not yet use civil nuclear energy as a part of its energy mix; however, by the early 2030s, it aims to have deployed small modular reactors (SMRs) to produce reliable, low-cost and clean energy.

Earlier in November, the chief executive of Japan’s Institute of Energy Economics criticised Australia’s clean energy progress, citing a failure to embrace a range of new clean energy technologies, including next-generation nuclear technologies.

Meanwhile, the Albanese Labor Government maintains its rigid, ideologically driven opposition to next-generation nuclear energy.

Moreover, Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen continues to ridicule the power source that provides the largest portion of clean energy globally and is being increasingly recognised as playing a significant role in the only affordable pathway to net zero.

If we are serious about having affordable and reliable electricity in the transition towards carbon neutrality, we need to take an “all of the above” approach to energy that leverages a balanced mix of technologies, including nuclear.

Read my op-ed on nuclear here.



OUT AND ABOUT



Engaging with Defence Industry stakeholders at a recent Defence Industry Dialogue event at my office in Adelaide.



At the inaugural Alliance for Responsible Citizenship (ARC) Forum in London with Hon Andrew Hastie, Hon Tony Abbott and Hon Dr Anne Webster.



Helping out at the Liberal Party Stall at Semaphore Street Fair.

Speaking at a Safety of Critical Infrastructure Workshop, hosted by Providence Consulting Group.





Hosting a Parliamentary Friends of Israel private briefing with Israeli family members of the 7 October terror attack victims.



Farewelling the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's defence liaison officer, who has completed his attachment and received a new posting.



Left: Meeting the 2023 Pacific Australian Emerging Leaders Summit Delegation at Parliament House.
Right: Australian Industry & Defence Network Showcase with Carl Quarterman (ADIN Board Chair).



An opportunity to examine shrapnel, weapons and other artefacts from the Ukrainian war—compiled by the group “War Up Close”, who were in Australia sharing their exhibition on the ongoing conflict.





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