



# THE FAWCETT FLYER

November 2017



## A word from David

The outcome of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey led to debate on the Smith Bill occurring in the Senate last week. While changing Australia's marriage law is now task for the Parliament, so is protecting the freedom of speech, association and religion.

These are foundational values for our plural, liberal democracy yet as many of you would be aware, they were subject to disgraceful attack during the conduct of the postal survey. Amendments to protect these freedoms that I'd moved with Senator James Paterson were supported by most of my Coalition and cross-bench colleagues but were voted down by the Senate during seven hours of debate this week. Despite this setback, I will continue to work constructively to ensure these freedoms are preserved in our law, building on the report into the

legal status of religious freedom I tabled on behalf of the Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade last week.

As Chair of the Australia-Israel Parliamentary group I was happy to welcome Israel's new Ambassador to Australia, Mark Sofer, to an event in Parliament last week marking the 70th anniversary of the 1947 creation of the modern state of Israel. Australia, through the minister for External Affairs "Doc" Evans, played a pivotal role in the United Nations to forge the agreement that led to a successful vote on Resolution 181 in the General Assembly. Seventy years on, the relationship between Australia and Israel continues to be strengthened by shared values and a resolve to work together on current issues such as cyber security.

Delivering on the Government's 2016 election commitment to develop a contemporary and comprehensive foreign policy strategy, I joined the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister at the launch of the Foreign Policy White Paper. The White Paper provides a detailed and frank assessment of the challenges Australia faces in our region and beyond, and sets out a framework to guide our response to increasing risks that impact Australia's national interests.

These risks include the potential for armed conflict between countries in our region, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the spread of Islamic extremism, cyber-attacks, espionage and foreign interference, and growing protectionist sentiment. At the same time, the rapid growth of Asia's middle class is increasing demand for Australian exports. The region's middle class is set to grow to more than 3 billion over the next 20 years. Opportunities will be increasingly driven by this surge in middle class consumers, from India through to China and all the countries in between.

National security will continue to be a focus even as the

parliamentary sittings for this year wind up. As Chair of the Legal Affairs Backbench Policy Committee I will be facilitating Coalition Party Room consideration of legislation to create the Home Affairs department, as well as new measures to counter espionage and foreign influence.

Over the coming weeks I will also be looking at governance and oversight issues raised by the creation of the Home Affairs department when the legislation is examined by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security. Finally, following a successful inquiry launch at a forum organised by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, I will lead the efforts of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade to develop a framework to enable more informed and transparent oversight of the management of the Department of Defence.



Senator David Fawcett

# 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper

The Australian Government's Foreign Policy White Paper, the first full review of Australia's foreign policy in 14 years, sets out strategies to strengthen Australia's security and enhance our national prosperity.

As Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, I attended the official launch of the White Paper with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in Canberra. The event recognised the delivery of a key 2016 election commitment.

The document clearly enshrines Australia's national interest as the primary determinant of our foreign policy, as we navigate an evolving international order in a contested and competitive world.

It describes five tasks set by the Australian Government for Australia's future, including securing our interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

While Australia needs a competitive, flexible and growing economy to provide for a strong national defence and sustain our influence on the world stage, we cannot rely on others for our security and prosperity.

We must advocate and be prepared to defend our values on the global stage – freedom, liberal democracy, rule of law, equality and mutual respect.

A copy of the White Paper can be found at <https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/>



*Congratulating Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on the launch of Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper.*



*With Baroness Berridge and Julie Bishop discussing religious freedom.*

## Religious Freedom

On 22 November 2017 the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull announced a review to examine whether current Australian laws adequately protect the human right to religious freedom.

The review lead by former Attorney General and human rights envoy, the Hon Philip Ruddock responds to growing concerns about the status of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion in Australian law.

The review should not be a considered a substitute for relevant amendments to the same sex marriage bill currently before parliament. It is instead a reflection that the right to manifest ones' religious or conscientious beliefs and values either individually or in community goes beyond the immediate issue of marriage and

extends to other areas of polity.

The Australian Human Rights Commission has previously recommended the Government consider strengthening the right to religious freedom by legislating Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights into Australian anti-discrimination law. To date, however, there has been no consensus on the most appropriate or effective means of achieving this.

As the Australian Government and review panel think through this important issue, I welcomed the opportunity to meet with Baroness Berridge and the Hon Julie Bishop in Parliament on Monday the 28th of November.

Baroness Berridge, through partnership with the University

of Birmingham is the Principle Investigator of the Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion or Belief. Her work provides education and advocacy to commonwealth nations to eliminate belief-based persecution worldwide.

It was a timely meeting to dis-

cuss the benefits of promoting religious liberty as a fundamental and beneficial component of a plural, secular democracy. I look forward to the continued dialogue and findings from the Hon Philip Ruddock's review into this important issue.

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## Celebrating Israel

As the Chair of the Australia-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group, I had the great honour of hosting the 'Celebrating Israel' function on November 29. The gala event held in Parliament House, was a celebration of Israel's history and achievements over the past seventy years, and featured an address by

Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

It is 100 years since Australian soldiers captured the town of Beersheba with an audacious cavalry charge in the afternoon of 31 October 1917. We now recognise this victory as the foundation of a unique bond between Australia and Israel that has bridged the separation of distance and the passage of time.



While Australia's relationship with Israel is longstanding, it is underpinned by our shared values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. With a grandfather and great-uncle who served in the Light Horse in the Middle East, I am aware that our

shared history dates back to the First World War.

Prior to entering Parliament I had the opportunity to work with Israel during my Defence career as an experimental test pilot, developing, testing, and collaborating on a range of aerospace capabilities. With that background, it was my pleasure to finally visit Israel in 2012 as part of a delegation of Parliamentarians.

Australia has supported Israel's sovereign right to exist within secure borders since its creation shortly after the Second World War. When the UN General Assembly voted to establish a Jewish state in 1947, the Australian delegation was the first to vote in favour of that proposal.

The Australian Government was also one of the first to formally recognise Israel, and sponsored the resolution that

saw Israel admitted to the United Nations in 1949. The distinguished Israeli representative Abba Eban acknowledged Australia's support in this way: 'the warmth and eloquence with which you welcomed Israel into the family of nations, have earned for you the undying gratitude of our people.'

Seven decades hence, reciprocal visits by Prime Ministers Turnbull and Netanyahu underscore the strength of our relationship today. Our two nations partner in agriculture, technology and finance, and we cooperate on challenges ranging from national security to climate change. Long may this friendship endure.



*The U.N. General Assembly approving Resolution 181.*



## Op-ed: Some things should be above politics

‘The goalposts weren’t just moved, they were cut down and used for firewood.’ That’s how former Defence Department secretary Dennis Richardson characterised the impact of defence budget cuts as the three-year political cycle drove the government of the day to chase a surplus after the GFC. The disruption to the planning, acquisition and sustainment activities of defence and industry hollowed out many capabilities and caused significant inefficiencies in taxpayers’ investment in defence.

The better part of a decade beyond the GFC, the world is a very different place. The rules-based international order—taken for granted despite it underpinning seven decades of unprecedented prosperity and growth—faces existential challenge. Destabilising influences

abound. In our own region, a nuclear-armed North Korea, attempts to establish an Islamist caliphate in Southeast Asia, and concern over trade routes through the South China Sea are but three examples.

In these uncertain times, the current government has articulated a clear vision for a secure and resilient Australia. The 2016 Defence White Paper—a blueprint for Australia’s role in maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region—is backed by a credible, decade-long funding plan. With the most recent federal budget confirming that defence spending will reach 2% of GDP within the decade, Defence has medium- to long-term stability for its planning. The First Principles Review has made fundamental changes to leadership and management that—

properly implemented—should make the planning and delivery of defence capabilities increasingly effective.

The defence industry policy and the naval shipbuilding plan aim to provide greater certainty about long-term investments in capability. The requirement for defence industry to have sovereign elements is featuring more prominently in government decision-making to ensure that defence equipment is more effective and affordable over the whole of its operational life.

That policy and funding certainty is giving local industry the confidence to invest in new technology, take on more employees, and commit to training the next generation of Australian scientists, engineers and tradespeople. In my own state of South Australia, over 1,000 defence jobs have been created in less than 12 months. Thousands more will follow.

But progress can easily be reversed. Opposition parties are wont to commit to policies that differentiate them from the government. A future incumbent may seek to rebalance political priorities, undermining the stabil-

ity needed to make efficient and effective long-term investments.

Historically, defence has proven to be a soft target for budget savings through force restructures, outright cuts or, more subtly, widespread deferral of procurement decisions. Think that won't happen again? The 2009 Defence White Paper was also lauded by many as a credible strategic direction for the defence of the nation. Despite that, our short election cycle led to decisions which prompted respected commentators to observe that the 'plans set out in 2009 are in disarray; investment is badly stalled, and the Defence budget is an unsustainable mess'.

While there's no substitute for good leadership, there is a better way to manage any government's first and most fundamental responsibility—a bipartisan agreement setting out Defence's priorities and the funding needed to support them across the forward estimates. If that phrase sounds familiar, you may recall my previous writing on this topic in 2013.

There is an international precedent. Since 1988, Danish defence budgets and policy have been set



on security interests to underpin the making of the agreement and shifting the political focus to its implementation. A bipartisan approach is the only way that our large and growing expenditure on defence will effectively bring both security in uncertain times and economic benefit to the nation.

That is why as chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, I have tasked the Defence Sub-Committee to conduct a formal inquiry into the benefits and risks of a bipartisan Australian defence agreement, as a basis of planning for, and funding of, Australian defence capability.

The parties of government must put the national interest first if the momentum achieved by the government—against budgetary and political headwinds—is to provide the lasting, secure future that the next generation of Australians need and deserve.

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by multiyear agreements between the government and opposition. Recent agreements, supported by seven of the eight parties represented in the Danish parliament, cover strategic policy, major acquisitions, force structure and even the general scope of overseas deployments. There are other examples of cross-party engagement in security planning and oversight, such as the US Quadrennial Defence Review or, here in Australia, the role of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security.

A truly bipartisan approach to defence in Australia would create a new strategic and political paradigm, allowing sensible dialogue



*Talking with Rural Media South Australia about the Government's reforms to rural healthcare delivery.*

## Continuing to advocate for regional healthcare

One of my key policy priorities has been to advance health services for rural communities in South Australia. Due to our State's population distribution, where less than 30% of residents live outside metropolitan Adelaide, bridging the gap of health inequity is particularly challenging.

Our population density in regional SA further compounds the problem in service delivery, relative to the Eastern states data often used in modelling for new health programs. Even our largest regional centres often cannot meet the critical mass needed to accommodate some full-time specialist services,

so our regional patients are heavily dependent on visiting clinicians or travelling to Adelaide to access health services.

Following my recent advocacy on rural health policy matters including workforce shortages, the Assistant Minister for Health, the Hon Dr David Gillespie MP, accepted my invitation to visit South Australia on Thursday, November 2.

A full program of meetings and a high profile media event was organised by my office, helping to build strong networks between local health providers and policy makers at a State and Federal level.

The day commenced with a Rural Health Policy Roundtable convened by me with the Minister, bringing together a broad range of stakeholders from policy, rural practice, medical training and academia. I was pleased to host local representatives from the Rural Doctors Association, the Australian Medical Association, Australian College Rural and Remote Medicine, Country SA Primary Health Network and the Rural Doctors Workforce Agency. A number of rural GPs, including Liberal Vice President Dr Max Van Dissel, also took time from their busy practice to attend.

The meeting also had a chance to meet Australia's new National Rural Health Commissioner, Professor Paul Worely, prior to his official

starting date. The position will act as an independent and high-profile advocate for regional, rural and remote health.

Prof Worely has strong ties with rural South Australia, as a former rural GP based in the Murray-Mallee region. He will now be responsible for the creation of a dedicated pathway to train rural generalists, those country health professionals who have far broader skills than the typical GP.

This has been a key focus of reform for the Minister, with more than \$28 million funding given to 26 Regional Health Training Hubs to expand the numbers of medical students and graduates training across regional Australia. A further \$26 million has also been



*Assistant Minister for Health, the Hon Dr David Gillespie MP (left) and the State Shadow Minister for Health Stephen Wade MLC discussing rural health policy.*

announced for an additional three university departments of Rural Health.

In South Australia, we are now serviced by two regional training hubs operated by Flinders University and the University of Adelaide respectively. Both hubs were represented at the meeting and the forum discussed the challenges to providing young doctors with clinical experience, given the lack of critical infrastructure in SA's rural hospitals.

A large part of this problem arises from the concentration of State health funding in metropolitan Adelaide. I was delighted that my State colleague & Shadow Health

Minister Stephen Wade also took the opportunity to participate in the meeting and discuss the State Liberal plans to decentralise decision making and restore services to country hospitals. These discussions also highlighted the need for better coordination between State and Federal governments.

Following this important Ministerial visit, I believe there is now an appreciation of how policy initiatives can be adapted to better suit SA's health system. The goodwill to improve communication and maintain ongoing policy dialogue with key stakeholders will also assist in future planning, helping to ensure SA's needs are better considered in Canberra.





Speaking at the Strathalbyn Football Club.

## Out and About in Mayo

Together with my colleague Senator Anne Ruston, I have been active in Mayo in advance of the next Federal Election. This month I represented a Federal Minister at the official opening of the refurbished clubhouse and function rooms of the Strathalbyn Football Club, where the Coalition had contributed \$30,000 funding toward the project.

Mayo remains a key battleground for the Liberal Party and a targeted advertising campaign was run in *The Weekender Herald*, a local Adelaide Hills newspaper, helping to keep our Liberal messaging prominent in the community.

Our state candidates also remain active in the lead up to the March 2018 election, combatting both Labor and NXT/SA BEST.



I am also supporting campaign efforts in key seats. In addition to holding fundrasing events, I recently had the pleasure of attending a business networking event jointly hosted by Sam Duluk and Stephan Knoll, where Senator Mathias Cormann, Minister for Finance spoke about the need to reform Australia’s corporate tax system in order to remain globally competitive. The event was very well attended, and I look forward to hosting the winning bidder who purchased my ‘sunset sailing package’ during the auction.

My team has resumed phone canvassing in my paired seats of Kingston and Makin, focussed on community concerns relating to electricity affordability and reliability. This also provided an opportunity to raise awareness of key aspects of the National Energy Guarantee being rolled out by the Turnbull Government. Given the topical nature of this issue, we had

an excellent response from constituents wanting to hear more from the Liberal Party in the future.

November has also seen the launch of the Biggest Survey in my paired seats, with more than 500 responses received in the first week. A sponsored social media campaign will further extend the reach of this survey, with results helping to identify key local issues and priorities for future campaigns.



*Addressing the Mayo FEC's Christmas Party.*

**David Fawcett**  
**Liberal Senator for South Australia**

Deputy Government Whip in the Senate

Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

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