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### Department of Immigration and Border Protection

Following the swearing-in of the new ministry led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott on September 18, there have been many machinery of government changes that affect the department and immigration portfolio.

The Administrative Arrangements Order the Governor-General issued confirms the following changes to the department's responsibilities:

- The department will be renamed the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP).
- The department will manage entry, stay and departure arrangements for non-citizens, border immigration control, citizenship, ethnic affairs and customs and border control other than quarantine and inspection.
- Settlement and multicultural affairs functions will transfer to the renamed Department of Social Services and the Adult Migrant English Programme will move to the Department of Industry.
- The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service is now a portfolio agency under the immigration and border protection portfolio.

The department will also contribute to Operation Sovereign Borders and the joint agency task force that has been established to combat people smuggling and protect Australia's borders. The department will continue to contribute to Australia through the management of its migration, humanitarian and citizenship policy and programmes.

<http://www.immi.gov.au/about/dept-info/mog.htm>

### **Settlement and multicultural affairs program**

Department of Social Services will administer most settlement and multicultural affairs programmes, formerly administered by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship including:

- Humanitarian Settlement Services
- Settlement Grants Programme
- Complex Case Support
- Diversity and Social Cohesion Programme
- Multicultural Arts and Festival Grants
- Building Multicultural Communities Programme

<http://www.immi.gov.au/about/dept-info/mog.htm>

### **Adult Migrant English Programme**

Administration of the Adult Migrant English Programme has transferred to the Department of Industry. This transfer places the Adult Migrant English Program in the same department that manages skills and vocational education policy. It also complements the emerging focus of the Adult Migrant English Programme on the role English language skills play in preparing migrants to seek employment.

<http://www.immi.gov.au/about/dept-info/mog.htm>

### **2012-2013 annual report highlights department's work**

The former Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2012-13 annual report has been tabled, detailing a busy year of activity, Department of Immigration and Border Protection secretary Martin Bowles said.

The department's work in 2012-13 included granting almost 4.7 million permanent and temporary visas; managing more than 33 million border movements and answering more than 2.5 million calls at its call centres.

"This has been a year of unprecedented change for the department and its staff have been operating in a challenging and unpredictable operational environment," Mr Bowles said.

Among the achievements highlighted in the annual report was a second successive year of growth in citizenship applications, with more than 120,000 people becoming Australian citizens at ceremonies, including a record 17,059 on Australia Day alone.

Compliance with Australia's migration system also remained high, with more than 99 percent of the more than 5.1 million temporary entrants during the year complying with their visa conditions.

The migration programme grew by 5000 places to a total of 190,000 places in 2012-13, attributed largely to the implementation of the department's innovative skilled migration selection system, SkillSelect, which was introduced in July 2012.

<http://www.newsroom.immi.gov.au/releases/2012-13-annual-report-highlights-department-s-work>

### **Temporary protection visas**

The Federal Government has officially reintroduced the Howard-era temporary protection visas (TPV). Under the Migration Act, the visa gives refugees protection for up to three years and prevents the visa holder from applying for permanent protection. Reintroducing TPVs was one of the Coalition's key election promises.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott announced plans to deal with the backlog of nearly 32,000 people already in Australia on bridging visas in detention centres. He said the Coalition would introduce a rapid audit of their claims, by which a single immigration case worker would decide the refugee status of people who had arrived in Australia by boat. Those found to be refugees would be given TPVs, with no prospect of permanent settlement – including for family reunions. Those judged to have no refugee claim would be deported or detained, and stripped of appeal rights.

The TPVs would allow refugees to work but would prohibit family reunion rights, a feature critics of TPVs have argued creates an incentive for men to bring women and children on boats with them. One of the biggest changes proposed by the Coalition relates to refugee processing in Australia.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-10-18/tpvs/5032594>

### **TPVs undermine human rights**

TPVs were a feature of the Howard government's asylum policy in 1999 and Mr Abbott referenced the former prime minister's own words during his announcement of the policy in August. In an election policy speech in 2001, Mr Howard famously stated: "We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come".

Amnesty International spokesperson Graeme Mc Gregor says the re-introduction of TPVs will undermine human rights protections for asylum seekers. "Once again, we have favoured punishment over protection of genuine refugees by choosing to repackage failed policies of the past," he said.

"The use of TPVs during the first Pacific Solution was shown to have severe mental health consequence on recognised refugees, who in many cases have fled terror and torture as a result of the insecurity around employment, residence and family reunion.

The Rudd Labor government abolished TPVs in 2008.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-10-18/tpvs/5032594>

### **Australian and Indonesia meeting**

Indonesia's Minister for Law and Human Rights, Dr Amir Syamsuddin, and Australia's Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the Honourable Scott Morrison MP, met in Jakarta on 30 October 2013 to enhance cooperation on countering people smuggling.

Consistent with the commitment President Yudhoyono and Prime Minister Abbott made during their 30 September meeting to strengthen Indonesia's and Australia's leadership of regional efforts in this field, the Ministers discussed a range of measures aimed at countering the scourge of people smuggling. Ministers reaffirmed that Indonesia and Australia were resolved to end a crime that afflicts the region, has led to the deaths of over a thousand people, and has especially damaged the interests of the two countries and their peoples.

They also reaffirmed that Indonesia and Australia would adhere to central principles in enhancing bilateral cooperation, including consistency with the Bali Process's regional framework and the Jakarta Declaration, respect for sovereignty and burden sharing. Ministers agreed that strong comprehensive cooperation would be a deterrent against people smuggling.

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/sm/2013/sm209269.htm>

### **Indonesia may review cooperation after spying allegations**

Indonesia says its intelligence cooperation with Australia on people smuggling and terrorism could be reviewed in light of reports Australia has been spying on its largest neighbour. Allegations that Australia used its Jakarta embassy as a base for political, diplomatic and economic intelligence gathering surfaced recently. "Then we will have to assume that such activities are taking place and draw our own conclusion". He says, until now, the two countries have cooperated effectively on sharing intelligence.

Dr Nategawa wants a guarantee that any spying will stop. "I think they would be able to say henceforth they are not going to do it anymore. Enough is enough," he said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-04/indonesia-to-review-people-smuggling-cooperation-with-australia/5069134>

### **Malaysia's foreign minister expresses his concern**

Anifah Aman met Australian counterpart Julie Bishop in Perth to present her with a letter of protest over the allegations Australia has been using its embassy in Kuala Lumpur for spying. "The Malaysian public are very angry about it and we also think that it is immoral to do so – you don't spy on close friends," he said.

"The explanation that has been given by the Honourable Julie Bishop... is not really detailed and we are not fully satisfied with it." Mr Anifah says that Malaysians are "simple" people who talk to each other when they want to cooperate on something.

"So if it was meant to be gathering intelligence for terrorists or trafficking in persons, why don't you talk to the authorities in that particular country instead of putting all the equipment in there?" he said. He says Malaysia does not have any equipment for spying at the nation's missions in Canberra.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-04/indonesia-to-review-people-smuggling-cooperation-with-australia/5069134>

### **Rebuke by Jakarta over asylum seeker boats**

Jakarta has rejected Australian requests to send asylum seekers back to Indonesia on two occasions since the start of Operation Sovereign Borders, the Abbott government has revealed.

In a rare move, given the secrecy surrounding the Coalition's border security regime, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has revealed the Coalition had made four requests to Indonesia to accept asylum seekers that Australia had picked up in Indonesia's search and rescue region.

Mr Morrison's statement came after *The Jakarta Post* reported that Agus Barnas, spokesperson for the Indonesian co-ordinating minister for Legal, Political and Security Affairs, said his country had declined to receive three out of six Australian requests for transfers since September.

It also comes as one group of asylum seekers Indonesia refused to accept was taken to Christmas Island. Their boat had been at the centre of a mid-ocean standoff, when Australian ships had responded to a distress call from the asylum seeker boat.

Tensions were already high over revelations of Australia spying on Indonesia, with Dr Natelegawa insisting that "it's a matter of trust and this needs to be restored".

My Suyanto rammed home his country's refusal to take the asylum seekers in a text message to the ABC News Service. "The Indonesian government NEVER AGREED to such wishes or policies by Australia. We have expressed this point of view since the Rudd government and there are no changes in our policy in relation to asylum seekers who want to go to Australia in the current Tony Abbott Government".

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/scott-morrison-twice-rebuffed-by-jakarta-over-asylum-seeker-boats-20131110-2xa6t.html>

### **Introduction of Australian visa application centre in Guangzhou**

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection is pleased to announce the introduction of an Australian Visa Application Centre (AVAC) in Guangzhou.

The AVAC is part of improvements to service delivery in China and will provide more convenient access to immigration services for clients through greater access to information, extended service hours and streamlined processing.

DIBP has an agreement with VFS Global to provide Australian visa lodgement services through the AVAC. You can lodge your application in person (by appointment) or by courier at the AVAC. Payment can be made in cash or by Chinese postal money order. A fee will be charged for this service in addition to the scheduled fee charged by the department for all visa and citizenship applications. An application service fee of 175 RMB will be charged for each lodgement. This fee is in line with average service delivery partner fees globally.

Applications will continue to be assessed and decided by visa office of the Australian Consulate-General in Guangzhou. Staff at the AVAC will have no involvement in the decision-making process or have any knowledge of the application outcome. Visa processing times will be faster if clients submit complete visa applications with all required documentation at the time of lodgement.

<http://www.immi.gov.au/contacts/intro-avac-guangzhou.htm>

## **International students battle workplace exploitation in Australia**

The union covering hospitality workers and cleaners in Australia has launched a campaign to expose unscrupulous employers who exploit international students. United Voice says the students are among the most exploited when it comes to the worst paid jobs in Melbourne. "We've heard stories in the hospitality industry of international students being paid as little as 7 or 8 dollars (AUS) an hour," said Jess Walsh, the Victorian secretary for United Voice. "Now in Australia the minimum wage is just over 16 dollars an hour."

Dr Mark Zirnsak from the Justice and International Mission with the Uniting Church said there are cases where overseas students working as cleaners have neither met their employers nor seen a pay slip. A recent union survey of 200 international students found one quarter received 10 dollars an hour or less and 60 percent earned less than the minimum wage. As well, United Voice says students reported being subjected to discrimination and abuse.

As part of their visa conditions, international students are allowed to work a maximum of 20 hours per week. Many international students need to work to support themselves while they study. Companies using those subcontractors are increasingly finding themselves the target of noisy protests.

Some companies have already been taken to task by workplace tribunals and fined in court.

By Kate Arnott for Newsline

### **Workers 'underpaid' by labor hire firm**

A company supplying foreign labour to one of Australia's biggest chicken producers has been accused of illegal underpayments and making employees work up to 16 hours a day. Former and current employees at the Baiada chicken factory near Newcastle say they have been paid half the legal minimum in cash and without any payslips. The workers concerned are supplied to Baiada by a labor hire firm Pham Poultry.

Steve and Kelly came from China on working holiday visas and were hired by Pham Poultry to work on the Baiada packaging line at Beresfield. The legal minimum for chicken processing casuals is around \$20 an hour, but they say they were paid a flat rate of \$12.50 an hour for men and \$11.50 an hour for women. Kelly is potentially owed \$7,000 in backpay for 11 weeks work.

The former workers say they paid \$100 a week to live in houses that could take up to 30 people each. Rooms were converted into dormitories and makeshift kitchens and Kelly says her room had six bunks for 12 women. The union represents 700 workers at the Beresfield plant and estimated there is an extra temporary foreign workforce made of 300 people. AMIEU branch secretary Grant Courtney has written to Baiada complaining that underpaid workers are probably owed \$160,000 a month in backpay.

**"Clearly it's not Australian. That's not the Australian way of doing things," he said.**

Baiada has become one of Australia's most powerful chicken companies, raking in \$1.3 billion dollars a year. In 2010, the Fairwork Ombudsman secured \$5,000 in backpay for a group of Chinese workers hired by a labour firm to work at Baiada Beresfield.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-10-17/staff-at-baiada-chicken-factory-underpaid-by-contractor/5027464>

### **Sex slaves get change at life free of abuse**

Women trafficked into Australia to work as sex slaves are being given a chance to start a new life thanks to a groundbreaking program giving them access to state-funded compensation. Anti-Slavery Australia, a non-government organisation, and law firm Clayton Utz have won more than \$1 million for 22 women forced to work in brothels in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra. The average payout was \$50,000.

David Hillard, a partner at Clayton Utz who runs the firm's pro bono practice, worked with young women from Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines who were the victims of "horrific acts of slavery". He said most came from poor backgrounds, had little or no English and were forced to have sex with as many as 1500 men to pay off "debts" of up to \$60,000. "There are probably hundreds of women brought into Australia each year for sex slavery," he said.

Mr Hillard said the compensation "means, at a practical level, that they're suddenly lifted from a hand-to-mouth existence". Some of the women used the compensation to start up small businesses, find secure accommodation, enrol in education courses, or return home for the first time to see their parents. Anti-Slavery Australia, part of the University of Technology, Sydney, and Clayton Utz are working on another 20 cases involving women who were forced to work in a brothel in North Sydney.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/sex-slaves-get-chance-at-life-free-of-abuse-20131020-2vutf.html>

### **Warning about dodgy migration agents**

This repeated warning follows complaints which have recently resurfaced about AUSFIS, an offshore web-based migration agency. The agency is alleged to have induced individuals to pay for visa applications that were never lodged.

Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash said the website invites people to register their interest by submitting an online web-form with their contact details.

"Once registered, applications are contacted by phone or email and are asked to pay a fee ranging from \$300 to \$3000 visa credit card in return for an 'Immigration Package to Australia. However, several users of AUSFIS's services have alleged that, once payment has been made, they either hear nothing further, or receive an email advising they are ineligible to apply for a visa" Senator Cash said.

Where people have paid money by credit card to AUSFIS, or any other migration agency for a service they did not ultimately receive, they can contact their credit card provider and lodge a 'disputed payment' grievance with them. The credit card provider may be able to retrieve all or part of the money paid.

"AUSFID has no influence on visa decision-making and does not represent the Australia government", Senator Cash said.

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/mc/2013/mc209139.htm>

### **'Illegal arrivals'**

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has defended the use of the term "illegal arrivals" to describe asylum seekers, saying he is "calling a spade a spade". Confirming recent reports that he has delivered an edict to his department to use the term, Mr Morrison said it was based on language used in the United Nations Convention on Refugees. "I'm not going to make any apologies for not using politically correct language to describe something that I'm trying to stop", he said.

"Let me be clear. I'm trying to stop people illegally entering Australia by boat. That's our objective. "I've never claimed that it's illegal to claim asylum", he said. "That's not what the term refers to. It refers to their mode of entry and so I'm going to call a spade a spade."

Mr Morrison also said he has deliberately adopted the term "detainee" for asylum seekers who are held at processing centre, rejecting the description used by the previous Labor government, "clients".

A leading Anglican figure in Australia fears the term will create a "toxic atmosphere" around asylum seekers. "It's not calling a spade a spade," the Canon of St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne, Stephen Ames, told ABC radio program PM. "It is misrepresenting the state of people who are fleeing for their lives and to call them illegal, and to perpetrate that and other dehumanising kind of labels, just doesn't acknowledge their situation".

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-10-21/immigration-minister-scott-morrison-defends-use-of-illegals-term/5035552>

### **Sri Lankans set to return**

Sri Lankan asylum seekers coming to Australia, whether by plane, boat or through third countries, can now expect to be promptly returned home.

The immediate decision to return all 79 passengers aboard a vessel which arrived in waters near the Cocos (Keeling) Island to Sri Lanka demonstrated the government's resolve.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says he's instructed his department to enforce a screen-out policy on all Sri Lankan national who claim asylum.

But Sri Lankans arriving in Australia through third countries where's subject to the screen-out policy. "Under Operation Sovereign Borders we are taking a much stronger position. We are not dealing in half measures under protest," Mr Morrison said during a weekly border protection update.

Commander of Operation Sovereign Borders, Major General Angus Campbell, said 53 people from one boat and a further 41 from another vessel were moved to Christmas Island.

The government is transferring asylum seekers from Christmas Island to offshore detention centres on Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island for processing and potential resettlement anywhere other than Australia.

<http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/morrison-says-sri-lankans-set-to-return-20131018-2vrgd.htm>

## **New student visas**

Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Scott Morrison and Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne announced a package of measures that would come into effect in March 2014 and simplify student visas through a streamlined assessment-level framework (ALF) and by extending streamlined visa processing arrangements to low-risk non-university degree providers.

“The changes will assist all providers, but particularly the vocational education and training sector, making access to Australia’s education system more attractive for overseas students”.

“Assessment levels under the ALF would be reduced from five levels to three, while financial evidence for AL3 students would reduce from 18 months to 12 months, provided funds were from a close relative or the student applicant. This would mean students from a number of key markets would be able to apply for a student visa with up to \$AUD 40 000 less in the bank”.

<http://ministers.education.gov.au/pyne/new-streamlined-student-visas-grow-australian-education>

## **Australian Computer Society Skills Assessment**

Changes to ACS skill assessments - Temporary Graduate – 485

As of 28 October 2013, the Recent Graduate application type will change name to Temporary Graduate – 485.

The assessment criteria will remain the same –

- Bachelor degree or higher with a major in computing that is closely related to the nominated occupation.

All applications lodged on or after 28 October 2013 will receive a result letter stating that the result has been issued for the purpose of lodging a visa subclass 485.

Graduate Skills Assessment

As of 28 October 2013 the Recent Graduate wanting experience considered application type will change name to Graduate Skills Assessment.

Only applications that hold a valid Recent Graduate or Temporary Graduate – 485 skills assessment will be eligible to apply for a Graduate Skills Assessment.

The assessment criteria will remain the same and the Skills Level Requirement Met Date will be noted as the completion date of the relevant Bachelor degree or higher on the ACS result letter. This change will affect all applications lodged on or after 28 October 2013.

ACS Migration Agent Notice – 16 October 2013

## **Jail sentence for migration fraud**

A warning has been issued to people involved in migration and visa fraud according to Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash. An Albanian national was sentenced to 14 months' jail in Melbourne while a former registered migration agent is facing up to 10 years' imprisonment after pleading guilty to multiple fraud offences in Sydney. 'The

court outcomes show that the penalties for fraudulently obtaining visas or permanent residence in Australia are not worth the risk,' Senator Cash said.

Albanian national Jani Vata and his spouse, Vjollce Marashi, faced charges in Melbourne Magistrates Court for using multiple false identities in applications for Australian visas, passports and citizenship. Jani Vata was sentenced to 14 months' jail. Meanwhile, former Chinatown-based registered migration agent Xiao Ying Wu (Amy Wu) pleaded guilty to multiple fraud offences. Affected clients claimed Wu dishonestly obtained more than \$80 000 in return for visa application services that were never delivered.

'Migration agents in Australia are required by law to be registered with the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority (MARA)'. Clients wishing to find out whether an individual is registered as a migration agent can do so by visiting the Office of the MARA's website.

See: [www.mara.gov.au](http://www.mara.gov.au)

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/mc/2013/mc208542.htm>

### **False identities catch up with fraudster**

A former Ghanaian national could lose her Australian citizenship after she was sentenced to eight months' jail for identity fraud, Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash said. Abena Saahene pleaded guilty to four identity fraud related offences at the Sydney Downing Centre Local Court. Her sentence was suspended upon entering into a good behaviour bond for a period of two years.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection will now make an assessment about Ms Saahene's citizenship status, and whether it should be revoked.

Ms Saahene was an unlawful non-citizen when she lodged an Australian citizenship application in December 2000, using a false identity. She then proceeded to apply for and obtain an Australian passport, and opened and operated a bank account using the same false identity.

'The department takes this sort of fraudulent activity very seriously and will continue to investigate allegations of fraud,' the minister said.

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/mc/2013/mc208664.htm>

## **United Nations High Commission for Refugees**

### **Global upheavals dwarf Australia's refugee numbers**

More people around the world were forced to flee their homes every day last year than the total number seeking asylum during the entire 12 months, according to the annual report on global trends by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

In what amounts to a reality check for the debate in Australia, the report reveals that refugee crises reached levels last year unseen in the previous decade, with an average 3000 people becoming refugees each day and many more seeking asylum.

BY the end of the year, about 45.2 million people were considered forcibly displaced because of persecution, conflict and human rights violations, the highest level since 1994.

“This reminds us that the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia remains relatively small by global standards,” said Richard Towle, the UNHCR regional representative for Australia, New Zealand, PNG and the Pacific.

Australia is 49<sup>th</sup> on the number of refugees hosted last year (Pakistan is the highest with 1.6 million) and 70<sup>th</sup> in total numbers of “people of concern”, which includes refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people and those who are stateless (Colombia is the highest with 3.9 million).

But Australia was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> on the number of asylum seekers who have lodged claims but have not yet had decisions.

The report highlights a continuing gap between richer and poorer countries when it comes to hosting refugees. Of the 10.5 million refugees under UNHCR’s mandate, half are in countries with a per capita GDP of less than \$US5000

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/global-upheavals-dwarf-australias-refugee-numbers-20130619-2ojd9.html>

### **Asylum seeker debate mean spirited: UN boss**

The United Nations refugee agency has expressed alarm at a “sharp deterioration” in the quality of protection for asylum seekers coming by boat and a “worrying erosion” of a public support for asylum in Australia.

Declaring that Australia is at a crossroads in its treatment of asylum seekers, the agency’s regional representative, Rick Towle, highlights the “increasingly negative and, at times, mean-spirited” nature of debate in Australia about asylum seekers.

Mr Towle also lamented the “ever-widening suite of deterrent measures” being proposed, or already in place, for boat arrivals – from the forced transfer to inadequate facilities in Nauru and Papua New Guinea to the use of “unfair and unreliable” screening arrangement to decide if people have legitimate claims.

He also cited the suspension of processing of more than 20,000 asylum claims; the use of mandatory detention; and limited levels of support for asylum seekers in the community “that are likely to inflict long-term harm and suffering” if claims remain unresolved.

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/asylum-seeker-debate-mean-spirited-un-boss-20130617-2oeio.html>

## **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

### **Typhoon Haiyan**

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop described the destruction in the country as a “disaster on a massive scale” as she announced the aid package Australia will give \$10 millions in humanitarian aid to the Philippines in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan, which ripped through the middle of the country, killing thousands of people.

About \$4 million will go to the United Nations, which is coordinating contributions from around the world. About \$2 million will be spent through Australian non-government organisation and \$1 million will go towards the deployment of an Australian medical team.

Ms Bishop said Australia would “continue to closely monitor and consider our assistance to the Philippine government and to the people of the Philippines to this tragic event.”

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has written to Philippine’s President Benigno Aquino to pass on Australia’s condolences after the storm that is believed to have killed more than 10,000 people.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has added another \$20 million dollars to the cause.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/julie-bishop-pledges-10-million-to-the-philippines-after-typhoon-haiyan-20131111-2xbku.html>

### **Australia’s trade and investment with APEC grows**

The importance of Australia’s economic relationship with APEC nations has been highlighted in a new report from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

*The APEC Region – Trade and Investment* shows that more than two thirds of Australia’s total trade is with fellow APEC members. APEC nations also account for almost 57 percent of Australia’s investment abroad and nearly 4 percent of foreign investment in Australia.

In 2012, Australia’s total trade in goods and services with APEC grew 1.4 percent to \$437.8 billion. Exports fell by 3.0 percent to \$231.6 billion while imports rose 6.8 percent to \$206.4 billion.

Australian investment in APEC member economies rose 7.3 percent to \$736.0 billion, while investment by APEC member economics in Australia rose 9.3 percent to \$970.6 billion.

Australia’s major trading partners in APEC in 2012 were China (\$125.1 billion), Japan (\$71.1 billion) and the United States (\$56.2 billion). In terms of investment, the United States was both the largest investor in Australia and Australia’s largest destination for investment abroad. China was the largest exporter on APEC. It was followed closely by the United States, and Japan. Much of APEC members’ trade is with other APEC members.

*The APEC Region – Trade and Investment* is part of a series published each year by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on Australia’s international trade in goods and services.

The publication is available on the DFAT website at: [http://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/stats-pubs/apec\\_region.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/stats-pubs/apec_region.html).

### **US diplomat warns Abbott**

Outgoing US ambassador Jeff Bleich has warned that American taxpayers may tire of footing the bill for global security in a coded plea for Tony Abbott to stick to his promise to boost defence spending. Mr Bleich, who ends his four-year stint as Washington’s man in Canberra, said while he was not telling Australia what it should spend on defence, the US wanted all of its allies to better share the load.

It is well-known that Washington was concerned about the former Labor government’s military budget cuts – which took spending down to levels not seen since 1938 – given strategic uncertainty

in Asia. Labor in its May budget restored some of that lost funding, and the Coalition has vowed to increase spending back to its benchmark 2 percent of GDP within a decade, up from 1.6 percent. Mr Bleich said Washington was “confident” that Australia would continue to do its share as it had in the past.

Australia will spend more than \$25 billion on defence this financial year, against more than \$700 billion by the US.

<http://smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/us-diplomat-warns-abbott-20130911-2tkrv.html>

### **Cao Lanh Bridge**

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Brett Mason, has joined Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam, Vu Van Ninh, and senior officials from the Vietnamese Government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Cao Lanh Bridge in Vietnam’s Mekong Delta. The Cao Lanh Bridge is the single largest Australia aid activity on mainland Southeast Asia and is being jointly funded by the governments of Australia and Vietnam, and the ADB>

“Upgrading the Mekong Delta’s transport network is central to helping Vietnam sustain economic growth, with limited infrastructure one of the most critical constraints to the country’s development. The Cao Lanh Bridge will directly benefit the lives of five million Vietnamese by stimulating private sector investment and local industry, boosting Vietnam’s exports, and improving access to social and health services.” Australia is investing \$160 million in the design and construction of the Cao Lanh Bridge which will open in 2017 and is expected to be used by 170 000 people every day.

[http://ministers.dfat.gov.au/mason/releases/2013/bm\\_mr\\_131019.html](http://ministers.dfat.gov.au/mason/releases/2013/bm_mr_131019.html)

### **International Day of the Girl**

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has highlighted Australia’s commitment to educating girls in developing countries on the International Day of the Girl. “This year the Day of the Girl focuses on the importance of education in empowering young women and lifting them out of poverty”. “Australia firmly believes that all girls should have the right to go to school”. 774 million people around the world lack basic literacy skills; two-thirds of those are girls and women.

For girls, every year of basic education makes a difference to employment opportunities, marriage age, health and their capacity to make better decisions about their lives and those of their children. “Education is a central pillar of the Australian aid program. It is integral to developing engaged citizens who are able to contribute to their communities and influence decision-making,” Ms Bishop said.

[http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2013/jb\\_mr\\_131011a.html](http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2013/jb_mr_131011a.html)

### **Resources**

Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2012-13 annual report the full PDF version can be found at <http://www.newsroom.immi.gov.au/releases/2012-13-annual-report-highlights-department-s-work>.

## Russian National Ballet Theatre

Welcome to the Russian National Ballet Theatre who have returned for a tour of full-length classical performances of Swan Lake and The Nutcracker in over 24 cities across Australia from September to November 2013. This follows from the successful tour of last year.

The tour is once again sponsored by Australian promotion company, XDR (Australia) Culture & Promotion Pty Ltd. Parish Patience are very pleased to have once again been able to assist the group of 50 people in obtaining Australian entertainment visas to tour around Australia.

Although the parent company, Beijing Xiandairen Culture & Communication Co Ltd (XDR) has been well known world wide from cultural exchange programs between China and the rest of the world, XDR Culture Promotions Australia has only been established in Australia for the last few years. However, the company has already had a successful record of bringing large stage shows such as the last Emperor, Wind of Shaolin, and Russian National Ballet Theatre 2012 to Australia. Given the popularities and ticketing success in Australia to date, XDR has many other exciting plans to bring more world class shows to Australia.

This time in a warm spring evening, between now and November, somewhere in a city in Australia, Tchaikovsky's instantly recognisable music is playing background of the wonderful Swan Lake. For those who have not seen it before, or say it last year, it is time to see it again as it brings timeless beauty, love and enjoyment.

We wish the Russian National Ballet Theatre tour every success and look forward to XDR's new exciting venture in the not too remote future.

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