

AusCSCAP

Submission on Foreign Policy White Paper, February 2017

1) The Australian member committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (AusCSCAP) welcomes this opportunity to present a submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) team working on the Foreign Policy White Paper.

Some members of the White Paper team will be familiar with AusCSCAP and its activities. Our intention here is to outline the organization's role as a partner for DFAT in shaping and presenting Australian foreign policy.

2) CSCAP was established in 1993 at the end of the Cold War, when eminent strategists and scholars from the Asia Pacific saw the need for a more structured mechanism for Track 2 diplomacy across the region. It has been influenced by the work and organizational structure of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) - in the regional economic sphere. Its membership includes analysts from universities and other research institutes, serving and former government officials and diplomats, the business community, graduate students, the NGO community and the media.

a. Through its participation in CSCAP's network of regional activities, AusCSCAP helps to promote a better understanding of Australia, including Australian policy objectives. The CSCAP network includes committees from 21 member countries – covering almost all member nations in the East Asia Summit (and also North Korea). The activities include two committee meetings per year, a major conference every two years, and study groups focused on specific regional challenges and drawing on a wide range of regional expertise. There are also ad hoc meetings on urgent specific themes. Details regarding CSCAP activities are available at www.cscap.org/. Also visit the [AusCSCAP webpage](#) for Australian member committee activities.

b. Working in these endeavours helps to strengthen Australia's role in regional conversations. At a time of deep transformation and unusual uncertainty (as now), having a voice in these conversations is more important than ever. Australian officials as well as non-officials are engaged in CSCAP's various regional meetings – and thus become better aware of the different regional viewpoints on the core issues of the day, and better able to explain Australian objectives and anxieties. All the national CSCAP committees have close relations with their respective governments. Some in the CSCAP leadership network have extremely strong reputations in foreign policy formulation.

- c. A particular value of the CSCAP regional conversations is the opportunity to explore new strategies – sometimes also testing an idea that might have been formulated by Australian officials. AusCSCAP can provide specific positive examples of this having taken place. The case of the 2008 Australian ‘Asia Pacific Community’ proposal is an instance where a new idea was not tested at Track 2 level - with expensive and embarrassing consequences.
- d. CSCAP discussions can include issues that governments find difficult to address at the official, Track One level – and again AusCSCAP can point to specific instances where this has proved useful.
- e. Membership in the CSCAP organization helps Australia build valuable personal networks in the Asian region. As the White Paper team will know, such personal relationships can be particularly valuable in times of inter-state tension or uncertainty. AusCSCAP can provide narratives demonstrating the usefulness of CSCAP personal networks in such circumstances.
- f. Over the last five years AusCSCAP - in cooperation with CSCAP Indonesia - has taken responsibility for editing and publishing the annual CSCAP flagship review, the CSCAP Regional Security Outlook. This publication is distributed widely and is highly unusual in recruiting authors from across the Asia Pacific Region. The recruiting process in itself widens Australian regional networks - and the intensive cooperation with Indonesia in the editorial process also has an obvious national value.
- g. Membership in the CSCAP network, gives AusCSCAP strong opportunities to bring influential and well-informed commentators from Asian countries to Australia. In many cases our guests are invited to speak to internal DFAT and Defence meetings; they also participate in our local AusCSCAP meetings – held at least once a year in partnership with non-Canberra think-tanks and research centres (including Asialink, the Lowy Institute, the Indo-Pacific Governance Research Centre at Adelaide University, the Griffith Asia Institute, the Indonesia Reference Group at Charles Darwin University, and Curtin University). In these meetings our guests – recently from Singapore, Beijing, Kuala Lumpur and New Delhi – bring valuable regional perspectives to Australian foreign policy deliberations.

h. AusCSCAP plays a broker role with respect to Australian researchers/analysts – many of whom carry out high-level work without realizing its potential practical significance. As a Track 2 organization, AusCSCAP focuses on Australian government priorities and seeks to harness the best Australian expertise to address foreign policy issues.

i. AusCSCAP is particularly concerned to draw younger Australian specialists into its activities – bringing them to both Australian and regional meetings, introducing them to personal networks, and helping them to appreciate the range of Asian perspectives that Australia must take into account. A recent small increase in our government support is facilitating a greater focus on this task.

j. AusCSCAP is an inexpensive and lean operation. The ANU Department of Strategic and Defence Studies Centre generously provides the physical office and part-time staff - funded by small grants from DFAT and Defence – who administer AusCSCAP’s various operations. The two Co-Chairs are unpaid. The current Co-Chairs are Richard Smith AO, PSM (former Secretary of the Department of Defence, and senior Ambassador), and Professor Anthony Milner AM, FASSA (former Dean of Asian Studies at ANU and current International Director, Asialink) - who bring strong government and academic experience to AusCSCAP. Previous Co-Chairs were Stuart Harris AO (former Secretary, DFAT) and Desmond Ball AO (Professor and leading specialist in strategic studies). Co-chairs have held regular meetings with both Defence and Foreign Ministers in the past.

k. There are numerous research bodies and think-tanks across Asia and Australia dealing with security issues, but CSCAP has a special value as a unique regional security network and outreach, possessing an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge and government access.

l. CSCAP study groups – bringing together national experts and specialists – have dealt with such topics as the handling of nuclear materials; preventive diplomacy; maritime cooperation; nuclear non-proliferation, marine environment protection (South China Sea) and the enhancing of regional security architecture. (See CSCAP website for a full list of former and current study groups). Recommendations emerging from these study groups are made available to individual governments, and also to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and other relevant regional institutions.

3) CSCAP’s effectiveness has been acknowledged in numerous academic studies of regional security – see in particular – ‘Assessing Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia –Pacific Region - A CSCAP Reader’, edited by Des Ball and Kwa Chong Guan. It was recognized also in the Federal Government’s Asia Century White Paper.

4) We trust that the Foreign Policy White Paper will recognise that in a regional environment more complex and uncertain than ever, and with a growing diversity of voices in policy-making processes in many countries, there is a greater role for second track diplomacy. CSCAP has an established and proven track record in this field, and AusCSCAP is well placed to continue to play a part in deepening Australia's reach and understanding in the Indo-Pacific region. Further Government support for AusCSCAP will not only advance Australia's interests and influence in the Asian region, it will also help to sustain the enthusiasm of the numerous busy Australian specialists who devote their time and effort to this organization, without remuneration.

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