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## Submission to Foreign Policy White Paper Consultation

I am delighted to make a submission to the White Paper consultation process and many thanks to DFAT Queensland for convening the Queensland Roundtable.

This White Paper process is timely due to seismic foreign policy shifts and represents an opportunity to build a broader constituency for foreign policy in Australia and more public knowledge about our diplomatic assets.

I attach to this submission our Special Issue on [Australian Diplomacy Today](#) for the Australian Journal of International Affairs 70(6) 2016, as a resource for the consultation.

This submission is grounded in three main ideas:

**Diplomacy is crucial to ensure the everyday well-being of Australians.** Foreign policy is not an elite, secret activity that affects only the powerful or political. For an open economy like Australia, with mobile citizens in a volatile but interconnected region, it is the stuff of everyday life. Therefore, we must increase endeavours to explain Australian foreign policy in accessible and transparent ways to all kinds of domestic audiences.

**Australia must invest in our capacity to be nimble.** It is difficult with limited resources to invest in a range of regional and global governance fora, but we must create as many diplomatic options to reframe problems as possible over the next decade.

**Australia should invest in a sophisticated soft power strategy.** Uncertainty around international relations creates opportunities for smart pivotal powers. Now is the time to invest in innovation around public diplomacy, and focus on a strategy that harnesses business, universities, NFPs, cities and regions.

Kind regards



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**Submission to Foreign Policy White Paper Consultation**  
**Susan Harris Rimmer, Griffith University**

**01 AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICY NEEDS TO BE GROUNDED IN A CLEAR-EYED ASSESSMENT OF OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS.**

*"... in a complex world, diplomacy is an essential element of [a] nation's statecraft that reflects and advances the nation's interests, values, and identity in the world."  
- Caitlin Byrne, Melissa Conley Tyler and Susan Harris Rimmer, writing in the Australian Journal of International Affairs, 2016.*

The current approach to foreign policy as the means to ensure security and prosperity requires more thought and nuance, as those twin drivers might lead to cross-purposes in our future relations with China, for example.

Peter Varghese AO, former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), refers to diplomacy as 'the compass by which Australia makes its way in the world', and made a case in a [Lowy speech](#) for the projection of values in foreign policy as well as self-interest.

*Australia's liberal democratic, secular and multicultural character is fundamental to our sense of self. It is as much of an Australian national interest as our security and prosperity.*

We need more public and democratic commitment as to why Australia pursues a rules-based order and why we should project and defend values in the hope of long-term stability. We also need to make stronger links between the power of diplomacy to keep us safe from interventions that may otherwise require the Australian Defence Force. As former Ambassador and Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Marty Natalegawa once said, "I am convinced of the power and efficacy of diplomacy – of dialogue and persuasion – in the sustained settlement of disputes."

We also need a stronger debate about how policy approaches to issues domestically such as climate change and [immigration](#) can undercut the work done by our external-facing agencies. William Fisher puts the case for decency in diplomacy [here](#).

**Recommendation:** The White Paper should include an explicit reference on the projection of Australian values as part of the national interest, including liberal democracy, open economies, secular, multicultural and committed to human rights, civil society and gender equality.

**Recommendation:** The White Paper needs a clear, plain-English narrative as to why foreign policy is important and how we will pursue our goals that can be adopted by a range of domestic actors.

## 02 AUSTRALIA HAS DIVERSE INTERESTS THAT SPAN THE GLOBE

Australia should remain focused our inclusion in the Asian Century. The reframing of our geographic focus onto the Indo-Pacific remains sound and should be kept. Our expertise on Africa and South America needs to deepen.

The global trends most likely to affect Australia’s security and prosperity are climate impacts in the top ten places, followed by cybersecurity (especially submarine cables), instability in the South China Sea, the prospect of another global financial crisis, and deepening inequality.

**Recommendation:** Australia must accelerate our understanding of climate as a structural risk to international relations and economic growth. The G7 New Climate for Peace [report](#) proposes five action areas Australia could address more strategically:

Action Area 1: Shared Global Risk Assessment

Action Area 2: Food Security

Action Area 3: Disaster Risk Reduction

Action Area 4: Transboundary Water Disputes

Action Area 5: Building Local Resilience to Climate-Fragility Risks.



### **03 AUSTRALIA IS AN INFLUENTIAL PLAYER IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.**

I attach a recent [article](#) on ‘Australian experiments in creative governance, regionalism, and plurilateralism’, first published 9 February 2017 in the International Journal: Canada’s Journal of Global Policy Analysis as part of a Special Issue on the Third Wave of Middle Power Diplomacy <http://journals.sagepub.com/toc/ijxa/current>

It is a great pity that we closed the investment by Treasury in the [Lowy G20 Centre](#). The G20 is of great importance to Australia’s interests beyond our host year. Australian diplomacy benefited from the analysis and track 1.5 and 2 interactions coordinated by this central point.

**Recommendation:** We should keep investing in MIKTA and IORA and other groupings that represent smart pivotal power strategies that can enhance our membership of other meetings such as the G20 and East Asia Summit.

**Recommendation:** We should renew a national investment in a G20 Studies Centre, to be a shared resource between universities, think tanks, NGOs, business and government.

### **04 AUSTRALIA NEEDS TO BE AMBITIOUS IN GRASPING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.**

I attach an [article](#) on Australia and the TPP negotiations, and the lessons we must learn. Many supporters of the multilateral trade system have watched the US election and Brexit with dismay. Australia has pursued the TPP with vigour and bilateral FTAs with considerable success. However there is a danger of a ‘trophy cabinet’ [approach](#) to trade agreements. These deals do not always have the social support required due to concerns they will be ‘Trojan Horse’ deals that will allow international corporations to limit the measures that can be taken by national parliaments to promote public health, user-based intellectual property regimes and transfer of labour and technology. DFAT vigorously contests these concerns. Nonetheless, the sight of at least 150,000 protesters in Berlin on 10 October 2015 must give any trade minister pause. DFAT must do more to broaden public consensus on trade. The recent JSCOT [report](#) on the TPP relating to process should be heeded.

Harvard University political scientist Robert Putnam reminds us that diplomacy is always a two-level game, where the domestic coordination and public support can be as hard as or harder than the global negotiations. Australia should pay more attention to business and civil society concerns about its participation in trade deals, and be clear on who the winners and losers of such deals may be.

Australian think tank CEDA (Committee for Economic Development of Australia) [recommends](#) using a pre-negotiation model, with realistic scenarios overseen by an independent body. Stephen Grenville has put the [questions](#) for such scenarios very concisely:

While there are good reasons for conducting these negotiations behind closed doors, the general principles of our approach shouldn't be secret. What issues do we feel strongly about? What do we have to give away and what will we win in return?

A recent parliamentary report on treaty making also proposes some sensible compromises to the real-world dilemmas Australian trade negotiators face. Recommendation 9 states that the government should:

develop a model trade agreement that is to be used as a template for future negotiations. The model agreement should cover controversial topics such as investor state dispute settlement, intellectual property, copyright, and labour and environmental standards and be developed through extensive public and stakeholder consultation. (Commonwealth of Australia. 2015. "[Blind Agreement: Reforming Australia's Treaty-Making Process.](#)")

My own conclusion is that, acknowledging the limited options Australia has at its disposal, Australia loses more than it gains in moving away from the multilateral trade system. Australia places its trade negotiators in odious positions if social consensus is lacking. What is clear is that the public debate on this issue is less rich and less urgent that it needs to be. The ultimate success in trade comes not from trade agreements, but from a domestic economy that puts a premium on productivity and competitiveness, while reducing inequality. Trade liberalisation that encourages development and interdependence is still a noble diplomatic pursuit.

**Recommendation:** Australia should reject any geopolitical security drivers behind trade agreements of any sort. Instead, as an open and engaged middle power, Australia should seek to enhance the rule of law in its region. In particular, nations must ensure any bilateral or plurilateral trade agreements are consistent with WTO rules and have open and fair accession regimes as a basis for signing.

**Recommendation:** Australia should also consider more carefully the development impacts of its current trade stance in case of spillover effects for developing countries. More attention is needed to the design of regulatory compatibility measures and their impacts on third country economies. The impact of investor-state dispute settlement clauses on the implementation of public policy goals must be monitored, as well as the complexity, cost and time for transnational trade litigation.

**Recommendation:** Australia should present much deeper analysis to Parliament of the possible cost and benefits of trade agreements with regard to jobs, different industries, income distribution, gender, environmental impact, rights impact, economic growth and trade, and allow for the agreements' modelling to be contested. JSCOT processes should be reformed or a new process to assess trade negotiations be considered. It should require higher levels of transparency and democratic accountability for DFAT trade negotiators than has historically applied. This means diplomats should seek evidence of rigorous human rights, gender and consumer analysis. Australia should consider a public listening campaign to problem-solve and socialise difficult areas of trade policy and bring added transparency. The Trade Minister should consider a Trade Policy Statement as part of a portfolio White Paper. This would help build some consensus about the endgame.

## **05 AUSTRALIA CONFRONTS A RANGE OF STRATEGIC, SECURITY AND TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES.**

I support the submissions of [ACFID](#) and its members on the identification of key challenges and their recommendations.

I am a member of and fully support the submission by the Women Peace and Security Academic Collective.

I focus here on the need for investment in preventative diplomacy, including a mediation unit within DFAT and more resources for Australian envoys in ASEAN and the UN systems.

In all the attention rightfully given to the new US administration and Brexit, one could be forgiven for forgetting that other difficult political situations exist around the world. But they do exist, and in the uncertainty that surrounds global governance in 2017, this risk of human suffering is great.

One [London School of Economics expert](#) has said:

*I think that this year is probably the biggest year for political risk since the end of the World War II.*

[UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres](#) has begged world leaders to make 2017 a year of peace. As relations between the US and Russia, the US and China, the UK and the EU start to recalibrate, no-one quite knows what the many ripple effects might be. We are in bushfire season for foreign policy.

In some cases of political upheaval, power might transfer or rights may be claimed without too much impact on ordinary people's lives, such as the Velvet Revolution in 1989. But more often political crises have economic and social costs, especially if there is violence or long street protests. Stock markets crash, children suffer interrupted education, health and transport infrastructure are affected, nutrition suffers, expats leave, diaspora stay away, people are displaced over borders, crucial legislation is not passed, and so on. Indian economist Amartya Sen famously made the link between starvation, famine and governance.

Some of these countries experiencing crises are the richest on earth. But G20 economies are experiencing a transition through elections, domestic unrest, cross-border activity and/or the impact of violent extremism (for example, France, USA, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, Brazil, India, Indonesia and Turkey).

Some are states that have been the subject of UN Security Council attention for many years due to armed conflict that threatens the maintenance of international peace and security (such as South Sudan, Afghanistan, Libya, Pakistan, North Korea, Iraq) or where geopolitics have bedevilled the capacity of the Security Council to act through the use of the veto power by one of the Permanent Five members, such as Syria.

Some are what the UN calls “forgotten emergencies”, where the humanitarian need has outstripped resources as the world’s attention has turned elsewhere.

For example, the UN has just scrambled to find US\$8 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund for humanitarian assistance for more than 2.2 million people in North Korea, including urgent nutrition assistance for 1.8 million children.

The UN and the government of Iraq estimate they will need US\$891 million this year to support 7.3 million Iraqis. One third of the population will require international help in 2017. Up to 3.3 million people have left their homes and thousands are trapped in combat areas.

When crises spill over borders, complications ensue. More than one million displaced Iraqis have sought safety in the Kurdistan region, and with them 250,000 Syrian refugees that Iraq was hosting.

Others countries are facing turbulence because of a new leader or policy, such as the Philippines and Venezuela. There is some talk of Venezuela as a failed state, where the resource rich economy has collapsed with lower oil prices and produced hyperinflation of a whopping 1,660%.

Some are regional crises as well as domestic, such as in Ukraine and Turkey.

In a globalised world, all conflicts and tensions have ripple effects that impact on countries like Australia, with our open economy and mobile population.

For an international lawyer, the priority must go to the crime of crimes, genocide. For this reason, the Australian Foreign Minister was right to formally inform Myanmar that the recent UN report on the treatment of Rohingya was disturbing enough to require a UN commission of inquiry into human rights abuses.

While we deal with crises, we still need to think long-term about the rules and structures of our global system. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, gave a rousing speech this week in the US about the need to uphold the global rules that are under threat through populist regimes:

*We need – all of us – to defend international law – international refugee law, international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law. For they – and the institutions that uphold them – are the very distillation and sum of human experience. They are not, as some would have you believe, the outcome of post-war bureaucratic doodling. They were woven together from the screams of millions who died violently or suffered horribly over many centuries. We know very well what will happen, should they be dissolved.*

**Recommendation:** Australia must continue to strengthen the quality and quantum of our humanitarian responses, and continue to invest in the UN’s humanitarian architecture.

**Recommendation:** Australia must invest more in preventative diplomacy and mediation. Many scholars and practitioners have argued that Australia should build our negotiation and

mediation capacity through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Why should the Nordics dominate mediation in our region? In October 2012, Australia's parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade recommended that a mediation support unit should be created within the Australian Agency for International Development, a department now amalgamated into DFAT. It is time to revisit this idea.

**Recommendation:** We must also try to strengthen international norms around conflict prevention, such as the Responsibility to Protect doctrine.

**Recommendation:** We should promote the roles of human rights observatories, the International Crisis Group and other early warning mechanisms.

## **06 AUSTRALIA USES A RANGE OF ASSETS AND CAPABILITIES TO PURSUE OUR INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS.**

There has been excellent progress on Australian public diplomacy strategies, such as the new strategy on sport, and fashion diplomacy. There can be so much more done in this area as part of a more sophisticated and measurable soft power strategy.

DFAT should continue to focus on delivering the Gender Strategy and new Women in Leadership strategy as a matter of key importance, as well as consolidating the success of the Ambassador for Women and Girls. DFAT should invest in a gender and foreign policy manual for the new Diplomatic Academy.

**Recommendation:** DFAT clearly needs more resources to undertake the role Australians need it to accomplish in the next decade. Increased DFAT investment should be tagged to the Defence White Paper investment targets.

**Recommendation:** Australia needs a sophisticated soft power strategy.

- DFAT needs to become bolder using e-diplomacy, following the Minister's lead.
- DFAT should consider a Youth Strategy, and a new thematic ambassador.
- The Minister should consider convening a meeting of mayors to map diplomatic activity and coordinate a strategy. DFAT should consider more broadly the rise of cities as diplomatic actors.
- International students and diaspora in Australia should be seen as key engagement partners for DFAT.
- Researchers should come to annual country and issue roundtables hosted by DFAT to share findings and design research.