



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

COUNCIL FOR AUSTRALIAN-ARAB RELATIONS

PROGRAM REPORT 2007-08



Council for Australian-Arab Relations

مجلس العلاقات الأسترالية العربية



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Council for Australian-Arab Relations

مجلس العلاقات الأسترالية العربية

The Hon. Stephen Smith MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Hon. Simon Crean MP
Minister for Trade
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ministers

I am very pleased to submit to you the Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR) Program Report for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008.

Yours sincerely

(Glen Simpson)
CAAR Chairman

31 October 2008

Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR) Program Report 2007-08

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Chairman's review

As at 30 June 2008, the Council comprised 11 members. In July 2007 the Council welcomed as a member Dr Peter Barnard, General Manager, International Markets and Economic Services, Meat and Livestock Australia.

CAAR has undertaken a solid program of activities in 2007-08, all of which have had a positive and longer-term impact in raising public awareness about opportunities for and the value of Australian-Arab interaction. The Council considers that, in particular, the ongoing impact and wide target audience of some projects (eg the future use of Arabic-subtitled Australian films, Deakin University's Arabic language training program, the improvement of people's livelihoods from the Bsharre irrigation project, and the *Doing Business* online guides) have provided added value to CAAR's use of its budget.

Three successful major activities provided clear indication of the strategic direction the Council will continue to pursue, by focusing on education, young people and flow-on effects for trade promotion. The establishment of the CAAR Scholarships Program was a major undertaking and the Council is keen to continue education sponsorship in the future, once the present scholarship period concludes at the end of 2008-09. Similarly, the CAAR Young Professionals Exchange Program this year was our most ambitious phase of the YPEP and provided opportunities for Australian and young Arab business people to learn more about each other's contemporary society and business environment. We fully intend to continue this program in some form in future years. And speaking of the future, we were excited by the findings of the scoping study on the feasibility of developing a teachers' resource kit about the Arab World for Australian schools, showing significant and widespread interest for such a kit among the education sector across Australia.

I thank my colleagues on the Council for their work during the year, and look forward to taking CAAR into 2008-09 with a full range of activities, building on successful projects past and present, and identifying new and positive ways to build relations between Australians and the people of the Arab region.

Glen Simpson, Chairman

Council overview

Establishment

The Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR) was established by the Australian Government on 1 January 2003 for an initial period of three years, as a new initiative to strengthen ties between Australia and Arab countries. Portfolio Ministers agreed in April 2005 that CAAR would continue on an ongoing basis.

Members

As at 30 June 2008, the Council comprises a Chairman and ten members appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with the agreement of the Minister for Trade. Council members are drawn from business, government and the academic community. The Chairman and members are appointed for a period of three years and serve on a part-time basis.

CAAR membership as at 30 June 2008



Chairman

Dr Glen Simpson, Executive Director, Coffey International Limited
(appointed as Chairman for three years from 15 May 2007)



Vice Chairman

Mr Roland Jabbour, Chairman, Australian Arabic Council
(reappointed as a member for three years from 7 March 2006)

Members



Mr Abduljalil Albaf, General Manager, Clubcafé
(appointed as a member for three years from 2 June 2006)



Mr Joseph Assaf, Chairman, Ethnic Communications Pty Ltd (reappointed as a member for three years from 7 March 2006)



Dr Peter Barnard, General Manager, International Markets & Economic Services, Meat and Livestock Australia
(appointed as member for three years from 17 July 2007)



Mr Syd Giller, National Chairman of the Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry
(reappointed as a member for three years from 7 March 2006)



Dr Fiona Hill, owner and director, Almanar Consultancy
(reappointed as a member for three years from 10 May 2006)



Dr Agu Kantsler, Director Exploration and New Ventures, Woodside Energy Ltd
(reappointed as a member for three years from 10 May 2006)



Dr James Langridge, Vice President (Overseas Operations), University of Wollongong; and CEO & Managing Director, Illawarra Technology Corporation Ltd
(appointed as a member for three years from 11 July 2006)



Mr Peter O'Byrne, Chief Executive Officer, Austrade
(ex officio appointment)



Mr David Ritchie, AO, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (ex officio appointment)

Retirements/Resignations

Ms Victoria Owen - former Australian Ambassador to Egypt and Syria:
appointed 17 July 2007, resigned February 2008

Mr John Rothwell, AO - Executive Chairman, Austal Group:
appointed 17 July 2007, resigned 28 February 2008

MISSION STATEMENT, OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

CAAR mission statement

To promote between the peoples of Australia and the Arab world mutual interests and a greater understanding and acceptance of each other's cultures, values, beliefs and diversity.

CAAR objectives

In carrying out its mission, the Council aims to:

- create partnerships that promote people-to-people links with Australia in countries of the Arab region
- promote the mutual exchange of information and ideas of excellence between Australia and Arab countries
- develop and promote the engagement of youth between the regions.

CAAR activities

Council priorities for the three-year period ending 30 June 2009 include:

- activities that promote Australia as a modern and sophisticated society and a competitive and high-quality destination for a range of interests that would include education, tourism, science, sporting activities and investment in those industries where Australia enjoys a strong international advantage
- promoting and supporting exchanges by young professional and business leaders in Australia and the Arab world
- support for public diplomacy and cultural activities that showcase Australia as a diverse and dynamic society
- focused visits by a CAAR delegation to a range of Arab countries, to identify and develop potential opportunities for cooperation
- other activities that encourage suitable commercial sponsorships for CAAR-supported projects.

Activities 2007–08

Performance

The core program areas for CAAR during 2007-08 included: business and commercial; education; cultural; public policy (including media); and society/social.

Outcome 1: Business and Commercial

Objectives:

- To promote in Arab countries an awareness of trade and investment, and tourism opportunities in Australia.
- To promote awareness of the potential of Arab markets among Australian business people.
- To promote the mutual exchange of information and ideas of excellence between Australia and Arab countries.

Key Achievements:

Young Professionals Exchange Program (YPEP)



YPEP launch on 26 February 2008 by the Hon. John Murphy MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Trade (far right), with the CAAR Chairman, CAAR Members, representatives from Australian Business International Trade Services and Etihad Airways, and YPEP participants

The fourth phase of the Young Professionals Exchange Program, planning and funding of which were completed in 2006-07, concluded in February-March 2008 with a very successful visit program for 15 young professionals from across the Arab region, who spent four weeks in Australia undertaking work-placement exchanges with Australian industry, as well as

receiving briefings on Australia's business environment and culture, and participating in a number of official functions and relevant social and tourist activities. The program was conducted by Australian Business International Trade Services (the international arm of the NSW Business Chamber) on behalf of CAAR, with generous sponsorship from Etihad Airways. A high-profile program launch garnered media attention and attracted interest from other Australian businesses in doing business with the Arab region and in future YPEP exchanges. Since the visit, the participants have formed an alumni group and ongoing collaboration has been established between several of the Arab participants and their Australian hosts, including between Australian and Arab business chambers.

'Doing Business' Online Trade Guides

CAAR, in conjunction with the Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AACCI), has funded the upgrade and expansion of its 'Doing Business' guides. The project will update the guides on Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE already published by CAAR, and will provide three new guides on Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman. The three existing guides have proved to be an extremely popular resource on the CAAR website, judging by the number of Internet 'hits' they continue to receive.

'Women and Leadership' Delegation Visit – Monash University

In December 2007, the Council sponsored a business networking breakfast for the 'Women and Leadership' delegation visit which was hosted by the Centre for Muslim Minorities and Islam Policy Studies, Monash University. The event provided a business opportunity for women from Australia and the Arab Gulf region to exchange ideas, foster new networks and international profiles. Guests at the breakfast particularly included professional women from the government, business and education sectors.

Outcome 2: Education

Objectives:

- To promote within Australia an informed understanding of Arab society and vice versa.
- To develop and promote the engagement of young people between Australia and the Arab region.
- To promote Arabic language in Australia.

Key Achievements:

CAAR Scholarships Program (<http://www.caarscholarships.com>)

In June 2007 CAAR established a scholarships program to promote greater awareness of Australia in Arab countries and to build people-to-people links. The program is managed for CAAR by GRM International. The Council is making available a number of scholarships to postgraduate students from across the Arab world to undertake study in Australia for up to 12 months in fields of relevance to Australian-Arab relations. Following advertising for applications across the Arab region, a shortlist of up to six candidates has been selected, with scholarship recipients due to start their placements in 2008-09.

Deakin University Arabic Online Language Training Program

The Council funded the development in 2008 of the final phase of Deakin University's *Arabic On-line* Language Training project, which will offer advanced Level 3 Arabic on-line training to students. CAAR previously made a grant in 2005-06 to Deakin University that contributed to the development of on-line training in Levels 1 and 2 Arabic, about which user feedback in 2007 was very positive.

Explore Australia Teachers' Resource Kit (www.ausarabexplore.info)

In 2006 CAAR launched '*Explore Australia*', a multimedia Teachers' Resource Kit about Australia, designed for CAAR by Ryebuck Media. The kit is intended for use as a supplementary resource in the curricula of secondary schools in Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE. In 2007-08 the kits were being trialled in a selection of schools in each country, with a view wider introduction. Schools' feedback has been positive and appreciative of a new resource about a previously-unfamiliar part of the world. CAAR is delighted that '*Explore Australia*' was subsequently awarded the prestigious Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) award for Best Multimedia Learning Reference 2006.



During the year, CAAR was also able to make the resource kits available to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), for use in a number of UNRWA's schools in Syria, which welcomed the kits as a very suitable English-language resource for Palestinian schoolchildren there. Content from the kit was also very useful in promoting a better understanding of Australia among schoolchildren and their parents at an "Australia Fun Day" conducted by the Australian Representative Office in Ramallah in the Palestinian Territories in April 2008.

Explore the Arab World Education Kit Scoping Study

In early 2008 CAAR funded a scoping study to establish the feasibility of producing an '*Explore the Arab World*' teachers' education kit for use in Australian schools, modelled on the concept of its award-winning '*Explore Australia*' kit for Arab students. The study has identified significant interest across the Australian education sector for such a kit, targeted at lower-middle secondary school curricula. Like the earlier development of the '*Explore Australia*' kit, the production of a kit for Australian schools would be a multi-year undertaking. CAAR is keen to proceed with the project, subject to funding availability in 2008-09.

Outcome 3: Cultural

Objectives:

- To deepen understanding of the traditions, values and beliefs of contemporary Australian and Arab societies.
- To foster greater awareness in Arab Countries of contemporary life in Australia and vice versa by supporting and promoting cultural and heritage activities.

Key Achievements:

CAAR Cultural Exchange Program (CEP)

Scoping Mission to Le Bardo Musée, Tunisia

In response to a previous visit in 2006 by CAAR to Tunisia, in February 2008 the Council funded a visit exchange by two academic staff of the Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific (CHCAP), based at Deakin University, with the National Institute for Heritage and the Bardo Museum in Tunisia. The Bardo is a national heritage icon recognised for its highly significant collection of ancient mosaics and sculpture. Museum specialists Associate Professor Andrea Witcomb and Mr Jonathan Sweet took part in a scoping mission that was aimed at fostering cross-cultural awareness between Australia and Tunisia, through the establishment of arts linkages and networks as well as an appreciation of Australian expertise in cultural services and arts management. As an outcome of the scoping visit, CAAR is also sponsoring a reciprocal visit to Australia by the Bardo's Director, Professor Taher Ghaliya, due to take place early in 2008-09, to enable institutional linkages to be established directly with the Australian museums sector.



L to R: Jonathan Sweet with Professor Taher Ghaliya, Director of the Bardo Museum, Tunis

Visit to Australia by Raed Saadeh and Dalia Habash, Palestinian Territories

In May 2008 CAAR funded the visit to Australia of Mr Raed Saadeh and Ms Dalia Habash. Both Raed and Dalia are deeply engaged in the cultural scene of the Palestinian Territories, as members of a number of cultural organisations including the Rozana Association, the Mamal Foundation, the Sunbula organisation and Yaboush Productions, and with business interests

in the visual and performing arts, contemporary art, heritage restoration and cultural tourism. They were keen to learn of Australian experience in engaging grassroots community involvement in cultural events, income-generating opportunities in promoting indigenous culture and handicrafts, and the conversion of community space into cultural and heritage centres. They also explored opportunities for cultural exchanges of Australian and Palestinian visual and performing artists. The visit took place over 10 days, with the participants visiting various arts and cultural organisations in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. Highlights of their visit included meetings with the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, and Marrickville City Council and community, in Sydney; officials from the National Museum and the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra; and Arts House at Meat Market, the Koorie Heritage Trust, Australian Sister Cities Association, and Multicultural Arts Victoria in Melbourne. Raed and Dalia were also interviewed by the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) Radio's Arabic language program during their visit. The Australian Representative Office in Ramallah has had the opportunity to work with Raed since his return to Palestinian Territories, promoting Australia as part of the Rozana Association's annual 'Birzeit Heritage Week' cultural activities.



L to R: Raed Saadeh and Dalia Habash visit the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Arabic Subtitling of Australian Films

During the year CAAR funded the Arabic subtitling of five well-received Australian commercial films of recent years (*Looking for Alibrandi*, *Look Both Ways*, *Swimming Upstream*, *Two Hands* and *The Bank*), for screening by our Embassies at Australian and international film festivals throughout the Arab region. This has made a valuable and permanent contribution to Australia's cultural library for Arab audiences, intended to showcase the quality of the Australian film industry and Australian society as a tolerant, multicultural, sophisticated community. The five subtitled films augment six other Australian films that were subtitled into Arabic by the Australian Film Commission in 2006 as part of DFAT's 'Embassy Roadshow' program.

‘In the House of the Muses’ photographic exhibition – Australian Friends of the Alexandria Library



In May-June 2008 CAAR sponsored an exhibition of works by photographer Susie Hagon and artist Darian Zam. Susie and Darian created a series of portraits of staff of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina as well as portraits of iconic and creative Australians, presenting a visual body of work themed on the cross-cultural exchange of knowledge and creativity. The exhibition had a public opening at the Egyptian Consulate General, Sydney in May 2008 and travelled to the Egyptian Embassy, Canberra in June 2008. The exhibition will then travel to the Egyptian Consulate in Melbourne, the State Library of South Australia and the State Museum and Gallery of Tasmania, and then abroad to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria and the Australian Embassy in Cairo, Egypt.

Outcome 4: Public Policy (including media)

Objectives:

- To promote the work of CAAR in Australia and Arab countries.
- To raise awareness in Arab countries of contemporary Australian society, traditions and capabilities.
- To promote to Australians the importance of the relationship between Australia and Arab countries.

Key Achievements:

CAAR/IMV Visit to Australia by Al Jazeera TV

In May 2008 the Council funded a visit by two Al Jazeera Television staff, Mr Zeyad Al-Ajlouni (News Producer) and Mr Mahmud Al Jazairi (Senior Journalist). The visit was arranged under DFAT’s International Media Visits (IMV) program, which co-sponsored Mr Ahmed Abdelraouf Awad (News Producer) as a participant of the same visit. The visit took place over seven days with the delegation visiting Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. Key meetings included the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), SBS, the Sydney Institute, the Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Islamic Council of Victoria, and a number of education and cultural institutions. The delegation also met with the Hon. Laurie Ferguson MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, and had a roundtable discussion with officials from DFAT and the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet. The delegation was hopeful that the visit would lead to some targeted coverage of Australia on Al Jazeera, with consideration of a series of documentaries under the moniker of ‘Eye on Australia’.

Stakeholder Relations

CAAR Councillors regularly engaged with government, business and diplomatic

representatives to promote the Council's activities, both in Australia and the Arab region. During the year the Chairman met formally with the Saudi and the UAE Ambassadors to discuss current and future activities. The Chairman will continue to meet with the Corps of Arab Ambassadors on a regular basis.

CAAR Program Report 2006-07

The 2006-07 CAAR Program Report was produced at no cost and is available on the CAAR website.

Outcome 5: Society/Social

Objectives:

- To promote people to people links between Australia and the Arab region
- To encourage activities that generate economic benefits for Australia and Arab countries

Key Achievements:

Bsharre Irrigation Project, Lebanon

In mid- 2006, the Council decided to sponsor a suitable project that would demonstrate in a practical way Australia's support for the Lebanese people in the development of the infrastructure of their country, and in a way that also reflected the historical linkages between Australia and Lebanon. In June 2007 CAAR commenced a water-sector infrastructure reconstruction project in Lebanon in the district of Bsharre, from where many Lebanese-Australians originate.

In addition to CAAR's funding, the Australian Government is also providing funding through the Council for the project. Funding is also being contributed by World Vision Lebanon (WVL), with in-kind contributions from the community. The project will be completed in mid-2009 and is being implemented on CAAR's behalf by World Vision Lebanon. Under the project, new municipal irrigation water storage facilities are being constructed in the mountains and irrigation pipelines are being repaired, upgraded and extended throughout the district. Do No Harm and Environmental Impact assessments have been undertaken and their findings incorporated into the project.



Australian Ambassador to Lebanon HE Ms Lyndall Sachs (centre), with WVL National Director Perry Mansfield (second left) and staff, and farmers at al Baal hill-lake in Bsharre in June 2008

During 2007-08 a night-storage reservoir in Bsharre (Siar) was upgraded and water capacity expanded to 300m³ per day; a 4,000m³ hill-lake was constructed in the Baal area; a hill-lake in Bekaa Kafra was upgraded and reinforced, increasing water storage from 61,000 m³ to 93,800 m³; and tenders were issued for the supply and installation of 8km of irrigation pipeline, to be undertaken next season. World Vision also conducted awareness sessions on environmental and water management issues with schools and farmers in the region, as well as in districts outside the project area. CAAR has been delighted to learn that the project work achieved has already had an impact on improving land values and agricultural incomes in the district.



Expansion in agricultural land in Bekaa Kafra after establishment of the lake

Administrative overview

Staffing

The Council is supported by a Secretariat located in the Middle East Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra. The Secretariat implements Council decisions and administers Council programs and activities. Enquiries concerning the Council should be directed to:

CAAR Secretariat
Middle East Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
RG Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
Barton ACT 0221
Telephone (02) 6261 2090
Facsimile (02) 6261 2248
Email caar@dfat.gov.au

As at 30 June 2008, the Secretariat comprised:

Ms Helen Smith Manager CAAR Secretariat	Ms Lauren Clayton Program Officer CAAR Secretariat
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Secretariat staff are covered by the human resource management provisions of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which include Occupational Health and Safety, training, the APS Values and Code of Conduct, and the Department's 2006-09 Certified Agreement.

Public information

The Secretariat maintains a webpage on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website at www.dfat.gov.au/caar.

Reporting

The Council reports to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Council has submitted an Annual Program Report every year since 2002-03.

Finances

CAAR is not a legal entity and cannot enter into contracts, incur debts or spend funds. In 2007-08 the Council received program funding of \$500,000 through departmental appropriation, administered by the South & West Asia, Middle East and Africa Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Financial Statement at Appendix A provides full details of CAAR's 2007-08 activities.

The Australian National Audit Office examines the financial affairs of CAAR as part of its examination of the accounts of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Sponsorship

During 2007-08 the Council received in-kind sponsorship in the form of international air travel from Etihad Airways, valued by Etihad at AUD 55,000, for the travel to Australia by Arab participants in CAAR's Young Professionals Exchange Program.

Meetings

During 2007–08, the Council met on four occasions:

- 31 July 2007 - Canberra
- 31 October 2007 - Sydney
- 14 February 2008 - Adelaide
- 6 May 2008 - Melbourne

Remuneration

Eligible Council members receive a 'Category 2' daily fee for Council business at rates determined under the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973*, for part-time holders of public offices. Members are also entitled to reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred on Council business.

Freedom of Information

The Council received no applications under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* in 2007-08.

**Council for Australian–Arab Relations (CAAR)
Financial Statement 2007–08**

Program Funding	Expenditure
Contracts	
CAAR Scholarships Program	219,999.82
'Explore the Arab World' kit scoping study	17,000.00
Grants	
Deakin University <i>Arabic Online</i> language training program	49,858.00
Cultural Exchange Prog (CEP) - Le Bardo museum, CHCAP visit	7,434.36
CEP - Le Bardo visit to Australia	37,378.16
Sponsorships - update & expansion of 'Doing Business' online guides	13,295.45
Sponsorships - UAE women's breakfast, Monash University	1,000.00
Sponsorships – 'In the House of the Muses' exhibition, Friends of the Alexandria Library	8,803.64
Sub-Total	354,769.43
In-house Program Costs	
Consultancies (Bsharre project, Lebanon - project consultant's travel)	5,154.17
Arabic subtitling of Australian Films – 'Embassy Roadshow' program	49,944.18
CEP visit - Saadeh/Habash, Palestinian Territories	24,572.94
CEP visit - Al Jazeera, Qatar	22,338.31
Sub-Total	102,009.60
Program Support Costs	
Scholarships Sub-committee meeting with GRM - airfares	579.32
YPEP launch, Sydney - Chairman's airfares, accommodation	1,620.64
Freight & cartage (banners for promotional sponsorship, <i>Explore Australia</i> kits to Cairo)	1,000.99
Sub-Total	3,200.95
Admin Costs	
Council meetings	
<i>Travel, Accommodation</i>	28,666.91
<i>Members' Sitting Fees</i>	5,746.00
<i>Catering</i>	1,275.08
<i>Official hospitality</i>	1,318.18
CAAR visit to the Arab Region – April 2007 - airfare refunds	-2,020.14
Stationery/consumables (business cards, postage)	2,078.82
Sub-Total	37,064.85
Total Expenditure	497,044.83
Budget Allocation	500,000.00