



Council for Australian-Arab Relations

مجلس العلاقات الأسترالية العربية

ANNUAL REPORT 2002-03

“Strengthening
Australian-Arab Relations”





Council for Australian-Arab Relations
مجلس العلاقات الأسترالية العربية



14 October 2003

The Hon Alexander Downer MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Hon Mark Vaile, MP
Minister for Trade
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ministers

I am very pleased to submit to you the annual report of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations, covering the period from the formal establishment of the Council on 30 December 2002, to 30 June 2003.

Yours sincerely,

Brendan Stewart
Chairman



Council for Australian-Arab Relations

ANNUAL REPORT

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Chairman's Message

Council Membership

Mission Statement and Objectives

Activities

Outreach Program

Promotional Launches in State Capitals

Restoration of the Iraq Museum

CAAR Visitor Program: Inaugural Visitor

Secretariat and Meetings

Appendix A: Financial Statement

Appendix B: Business Plan

Appendix C: Administrative Circular PO 471



On 30 December 2002, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer and the Minister for Trade Mark Vaile announced that the Government would establish a Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR) to strengthen ties and understanding between Australia and Arab countries.

The Ministers said the Council's establishment was now even more appropriate given the significant developments over the past year.

Mr Downer said Australians had a range of significant interests in the Middle East and North Africa. He said the new Council would help build bridges between Australia and Arab countries and confirm that Australia had great respect and admiration for Islam, highly valued its own Muslim communities and looked forward to closer links with Arab countries.

Mr Vaile said the Council would build on the recent spectacular growth in Australia's trade with the Middle East. Total merchandise exports grew by almost 40 per cent in 2001. This followed average annual growth in our exports to the Middle East of 12.7 per cent between 1996 and 1999.

Introduction

The Council for Australian-Arab Relations was established by the Australian Government in December 2002, as an entirely new initiative to strengthen ties between Australia and Arab countries. The Council consists of 15 members drawn from a wide cross-section of the Australian Community. The Council is chaired by Mr Brendan Stewart, Chairman of AWB Limited.

The Council is serviced by a secretariat located in the Middle East Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra.

Chairman's Message

I am proud to be associated with the establishment of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR) which has already begun its work in strengthening Australia's relations with Arab countries. The decision to establish the Council followed a key recommendation by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade following a review released in August 2001 of Australia's relations with the Middle East.

The Council will play an important role in assisting the Government to enhance Australia's economic, political, cultural and social relations with Arab countries.

Working with other organisations, the Council will support and encourage activities to promote a better mutual understanding of culture, values, beliefs and diversity between Australia and the Arab world.

Since our inaugural meeting in March, we have consulted community groups, business and other clients. We held a series of promotional launches in state capitals where I outlined the Council's objectives and proposed activities; we sponsored a visit to Baghdad by world-renowned archaeologist Dr Dan Potts, to help restore the records of the Iraq Museum; we organised a visit to Australia by CAAR's first guest, Mr Usama Al Kurdi, from the Saudi Shura Council; and we put in place a visit to Australia in the new financial year by Mr Jad El Hage, a London-based correspondent for *Al-Hayat*, to promote a deeper understanding of Australia in Arab countries. My plan to visit a number of Arab countries in June had to be postponed until October.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Council, the Secretariat and Australia's missions in Arab countries for your contribution to the work of the Council in this first exciting year.



Brendan Stewart
Chairman

Council Membership

The chairperson and members of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations are appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with the agreement of the Minister for Trade, and come from various sectors of the Australian community. Members serve part-time, receiving sitting fees and travelling allowances in accordance with Remuneration Tribunal Determinations. The chairperson and members hold office for a term of three years.

Members of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations as at 30 June 2003

Chairman:

Mr Brendan Stewart, Chairman, AWB Limited (appointed Chairman for three years from 21 February 2003)

Members:

Mr Joseph Assaf, Chairman and CEO, Ethnic Communications Pty Ltd (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)

Mr John Conomos, Senior Executive Vice President, Toyota Motor Corporation Australia Limited (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)

Mr Tom Harley, Vice President, Mergers Acquisitions and Divestments, BHP Billiton Petroleum (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)

Mr Syd Giller, National Chairman, Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)

Ms Pru Goward, Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, HREOC (appointed for three years from 5 May 2003)

Mr Gary Helou, Chief Executive Officer SunRice (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)

Dr Fiona Hill, Director of Almanar Consultancy (appointed for three years from 5 May 2003)

Mr Roland Jabbour, Chairman, Australian Arabic Council (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)

Dr Agu Kantsler, Managing Director, Woodside Petroleum (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)

Mr Paul O'Sullivan, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (appointed as a member for three years from 16 June 2003) representing Dr Ashton Calvert, Secretary

Mr Peter O'Byrne, Managing Director, Austrade (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)

Mr Tom Phillips, President and CEO, Mitsubishi Motors Australia (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)

Mr Fathi (Fred) Shahin, OAM, Managing Director, the Peregrine Corporation (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)

Professor Ahmad Shboul AM, Chair, Department of Arabic & Islamic Studies, University of Sydney (appointed as a member for three years from 21 February 2003)



Members of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations

Seated (from left to right): Mr Paul O'Sullivan, Dr Fiona Hill, Mr Brendan Stewart (Chairman), Ms Pru Goward and Mr Fred Shahin OAM

Standing (from left to right): Mr Gary Helou, Mr Roland Jabbour, Mr Tom Harley, Dr Agu Kantsler, Prof Ahmad Shboul AM, Mr Syd Giller, Mr Tom Phillips and Mr Joseph Assaf

Absent: Mr John Conomos and Mr Peter O'Byrne

Mission Statement and Objectives

MISSION STATEMENT

The Council has adopted the following 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.

OBJECTIVES

In carrying out its mission, the Council aims to:

- ❖ Broaden awareness and understanding of each other's history, culture, society and areas of excellence
- ❖ Promote greater understanding of mutual foreign policy interests;
- ❖ Encourage activities that generate economic benefits for Australia and Arab countries
- ❖ Promote Australia's image in the Arab world as a culturally diverse nation of creative and innovative achievement in technology, industry, agriculture, education, the arts and sport
- ❖ Identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration between Australia and Arab countries
- ❖ Establish a strategic framework and long-term plan to foster and promote relations between Australia and Arab countries; and
- ❖ Complement the work of existing organisations through strategic partnerships

To achieve these aims the Council will pursue activities in four categories:

❖ **Media and Publicity**

- To promote Australian achievements, joint ventures and success stories of Australia in Arab countries, and of Arab countries in Australia.
- 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
- To promote the work of CAAR in Australia and Arab countries

❖ **Business and Commerce**

- To promote awareness of the potential of Arab markets among Australian business people
- To promote in Arab countries an awareness of trade and investment, and tourism opportunities in Australia
- To promote bilateral trade opportunities between Australia and Arab countries
- To identify opportunities for employment and support the placement of Australians with Arabic language and business skills
- To enhance awareness of Australian capabilities as a supplier of sophisticated services, including but not limited to education, information technology and tourism, in addition to traditional commodities

❖ **Education**

- To promote within Australia an informed understanding of Arab society and politics
- To promote and facilitate collaboration between universities and research organisations in Australia and Arab countries
- To promote Arabic language in Australia
- To promote Australian studies in Arab countries
- To develop a cadre of Australian graduates with Arabic language skills and a practical understanding of business practice and culture in Arab countries
- To encourage Australian students to develop a long-term interest in Australian-Arab relations

❖ **Cultural**

- To foster greater awareness in Arab countries of contemporary life in Australia and in Australia of contemporary life in Arab countries by supporting and promoting cultural, heritage and sporting activities
- To deepen understanding of the traditions, values and beliefs of contemporary Australian and Arab societies
- To complement the marketing activities of Australian companies and organisations
- To promote cross-cultural relations

Activities

Outreach Program

The Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR) undertook an outreach program within Australia. The aim of the program was to identify the Council's clients, including politicians, business representatives, academics and journalists with an interest in the Arab world as well as Australia's Arab communities. The program generated a strong positive response. Many Australian Arabs said they had felt the lack of any link between themselves and the Government. They see the Council as being that link and have high hopes for it.

Promotional Launches in State Capitals

We held a series of promotional launches in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide in May and June to let Australians know about the Council and to identify representatives of Arab community groups, business, academics and the media who would be interested in the Council's work.

The Chairman, Mr Brendan Stewart, addressed these gatherings, explaining the Council's objectives and proposed activities. The launches were followed by lively discussions between Mr Stewart and guests.



Ms Clare Birgin, Director Middle East Section, DFAT introduces Sheikh Taj Aldin Alhilali, Mufti of Australia and New Zealand, to the Chairman of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations, Mr Brendan Stewart, at the Sydney launch.

Restoration of the Iraq Museum

CAAR sponsored a successful visit to Baghdad in May by Dr Dan Potts, Professor of Middle Eastern Archaeology, University of Sydney to help with the restoration of the Iraq Museum.

On behalf of the Council, Dr Potts donated a laptop computer, software, scanner and digital camera to help the museum with the enormous task of re-establishing records and for future record-keeping. Dr Potts also trained museum staff to use the equipment.



From left to right, Prof Ahmad Shboul, Dr Daniel Potts and Mr Joseph Assaf thanking Dr Potts for delivering the Council's gifts to the Iraq Museum.

Dr Potts's visit was most timely. The Council's gifts were the first material support the Museum had received of any kind and were gratefully accepted. This initiative has been particularly warmly received by Arab community groups in Australia.

CAAR Visitor Program: Inaugural Visitor

Mr Usamah Al-Kurdi, Member of the Economic Affairs Committee of the Saudi Shoura Council and former Secretary General, Council of Saudi Chambers and Industry, visited Australia 12-19 June as the first guest of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR) under the Council's visitor program.

Mr Al-Kurdi met federal and state government ministers and officials, and visited chambers of commerce, government departments and businesses in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. In his meetings Mr Al-Kurdi said the pendulum of investment was swinging away from the traditional markets of the United States and Europe, and Australia was well placed to take advantage of this change.

The visit has led to a series of meetings of Australian Vice-Chancellors to discuss how best to approach the Saudi education market. These Vice-Chancellors and other prominent figures in Australian education services are planning a visit to Saudi Arabia in March 2004.



The Chairman, Mr Stewart introduces Mr Al-Kurdi to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Alexander Downer.



Mr Al Kurdi meets members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. Picture, from left: Mr Laurie Ferguson MP, The Hon David Jull MP, Mr Al-Kurdi, Senator the Hon Nick Bollock and Mr David Hawker MP

Secretariat and Meetings

Secretariat

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Administrative Circular establishing the Council for Australian-Arab Relations states that a secretariat would be provided by the Department's Middle East Section.

The functions of the Secretariat are to provide administrative support for the Council, to implement recommendations of the Council and to undertake other activities as deemed appropriate by the Council.

The Director of the Secretariat is Ms Clare Birgin.

The Secretariat's Office is at:

Middle East Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
RG Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
BARTON ACT 0221

The postal address and telephone numbers are as follows:

Council for Australian-Arab Relations
Secretariat
Middle East Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
RG Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
BARTON ACT 0221

Telephone (02) 6261 3461
Facsimile (02) 6261 2640

Public Information

The CAAR Secretariat maintains a web page on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade web site: www.dfat.gov.au/caar.

Meetings

During 2002-03, the Council met on one occasion: 14 March 2003 in Canberra. At the inaugural meeting the Council adopted a logo and agreed on the text of a strategic plan and activities to publicise the Council's existence and aims.

Appendix A
Council for Australian-Arab Relations
Financial Statement 2002-03

Program expenditure

Publicity, Promotion and Media

CAAR launches in state capitals	\$41,123
Chairman's visit to Arab countries	\$18,590
Visit to Australia by a journalist from <i>El Hayat</i>	\$15,350
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$75,063.00</i>

Business and Commercial

Visit to Australia by Mr Al Kurdi, Saudi Shura Council	\$25,125
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$25,125.00</i>

Cultural

Visit to Iraq Museum, Baghdad by Dr Potts	\$19,704
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$19,704.00</i>

Establishment Costs

For Council banners, brochures, stationery	\$23,144
Development of the Council's website	\$ 150
	<i>Subtotal</i>
	\$23,294.00

Administration

Expenditure on general administration, including sitting fees and travel for the inaugural Council meeting and sundries (postage, couriers)	<i>Subtotal</i>	\$6397
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Summary of Receipts and Expenditure for 2002-03

Receipts

2002-03 budget allocation	\$150,000
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Expenditure

Publicity, Promotion & Media	\$75,063
Business & Commercial	\$25,125
Cultural	\$19,704
Establishment Costs	\$23,294
Administration	\$ 6,397
	Total expenditure
	\$149,583

Balance as at 30 June 2003	\$ 417
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BUSINESS PLAN – SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES PROPOSALS

<i>ACTIVITY</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>BUDGET</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
a) Logo, Stationery and Banner	Organise printing of stationery, business cards, etc. and Council banner bearing Council logo	\$6,000	
b) Inaugural Meeting and Lunch	First meeting of the Council at DFAT offices on 14 March 2003	\$14,000	Council members attendance (airfares, daily fees, taxis, etc.) \$11,500. Food, drinks and service for lunch \$2,500.
c) State Capitals - Briefings and Receptions	Briefings and receptions conducted and hosted by Chair and Council members in major state capitals (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth) in April and May 2003	\$25,000	Invitees to include govt. officials, individuals and bodies associated with Australian-Arab issues, business people and media representatives. Budget provides for six events for approx 30-40 people at \$2,500 each event / Council member attendance costs \$3,000 / Secretariat staff airfares, travel expenses (preparatory visits to state capitals and on-ground support for briefings and receptions) \$7,000.
d) Official Launch and Dinner	Formal launch of CAAR at Parliament House in the Great Hall. Event may coincide with visit by Egyptian delegation led by Secretary-General Arab League, Mr Amr Moussa	\$40,000	About 200 to 300 people to attend – Ministers, parliamentarians, Council members, Arab Ambassadors, Australian-Arab community representatives, business people.
e) CAAR Website	Creation of CAAR website including Arabic text - co-located on DFAT's website	\$4,000	In-house support from DFAT. Website to incorporate Arabic text/translations.
f) Council Visitor Program	Visit to Australia by a notable Arab figure	\$20,000	Airfares, accommodation and living expenses for visit of about two weeks.
g) Chair's Visit to Arab Countries	12-day visit to selected Arab capitals	\$40,000	Chair accompanied by secretariat employee. Airfares: \$14,000 each Accn: \$3,600 each Meals: \$2,400 each
		\$150,000	Note: Miscellaneous commitments and expenditures are estimated at about \$1,000

Administrative Circular
RETAIN AS POLICY DOCUMENT

Distribution: All staff to see

cc Austrade:

Canberra ACT 0221

No: P0471

6 February 2003

File No.: 02/130168

Subject: Establishment of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR)

SUMMARY: On 30 December 2002, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, and the Minister for Trade, Mr Vaile, announced the establishment of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations. This Administrative Circular implements the Ministers' decision and sets out the arrangements for the Council's operation.

In accordance with the Ministers' decision, the Council for Australian-Arab Relations was established with effect from 1 January 2003, for an initial period of three years, at the end of which it will be reviewed and, if appropriate, made permanent.

Purposes

2. The Council's function is to advance Australia's national interest by initiating and supporting activities designed to enhance awareness and understanding between the peoples and institutions of Australia and the Arab countries. In carrying out its mission the Council will aim to:

broaden awareness and understanding in Australia and the Arab countries of each other's cultures, traditions and social and political institutions and areas of excellence;

influence corporate Australia and assist in developing government policies to enhance Australia's economic and political relations with Arab countries; and

support Australia's broader diplomatic objectives among Arab countries.

Structure and Membership

3. The Council will consist of a chair, plus not less than eight nor more than 12 other members, and a Secretariat provided by Middle East and Africa Branch (MAB), funded from within the resources of South Pacific, Africa and Middle East Division (PMD).

4. The Secretary, or a representative appointed by the Secretary, and the Managing Director of Austrade, or a representative appointed by the Managing Director, will be members of the Council.

5. The chair and the other members of the Council will be appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs with the agreement of the Minister for Trade on a part-time basis for terms of up to three years, but are eligible for re-appointment. Council members will be drawn from business, Government and the academic community.
6. Provided there are at least seven members of the Council, the Council will be able to operate notwithstanding other vacancies.
7. The chair and members may be reappointed, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs may terminate the appointment of the chair or a member at any time by notice in writing.
8. A member may resign his or her membership by notice in writing to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, but the resignation does not have effect until it is accepted by the Minister.
9. Neither the chair nor the other members of the Council will be employees of the Department or the Commonwealth by virtue only of their appointment to the Council.
10. The Council will not be a legal entity. Therefore the Council will not be able to enter into contracts, incur debts or spend funds. Instead, the Department will be able to enter into contracts and spend funds for the Council's purposes, in order to perform the Council's activities and implement its recommendations.

Functions

11. The Council will have the functions to:

make recommendations to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade for enhancing Australia's cultural, economic, political and social relations with Arab countries; and

develop an annual business plan of activities aimed at implementing the Council's objectives. The business plan will recommend expenditures on those activities, from funds allocated to the Council.

12. The Minister for Foreign Affairs may from time to time issue directives to the Council, and the Council will be bound by such directives.

13. To meet government accountability requirements, the First Assistant Secretary, South Pacific, Africa and Middle East Division (FAS PMD), will have responsibility for approving the expenditure of funds, the engagement of consultants and entering into contracts by the Department for the performance of the activities mandated by the Council's business plan and for other matters related to the carrying out of the Council's purposes.

14. The Secretariat will have functions to:

- provide administrative support for the Council;
- implement the recommendations of the Council; and
- undertake other activities as appropriate.

15. In carrying out their functions, Council members and the Secretariat will confer as necessary with Austrade, and other relevant agencies and bodies.

Activities

16. The Council will determine the activities to be undertaken in each year in its annual business plan, which may be modified by the Council from time to time. The activities will be directed towards achieving the Council's purposes and may include (but not be limited to) the following:

- activities to promote economic relations between Australia and Arab countries, including the commissioning of publications and studies in areas such as commercial opportunities in Arab countries for Australian businesses, and a young business entrepreneur program;
- visits by high profile persons from Arab countries;
- visits by Council members and other high profile Australians to Arab countries;
- activities aimed at encouraging Australian media interest in Arab countries, and Arab country media interest in Australia;
- information distribution programs;
- activities in consultation with Images of Australia Branch (IAB) to promote mutual understanding of Australian and Arab culture;
- educational and academic activities; and
- promoting the study of the Arabic language in Australia.

17. The annual business plan will be notified to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who may disallow or amend it at any time.

Remuneration

18. Members of the Council, other than the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or the Managing Director of Austrade, or their representatives:

will be entitled to the following remuneration at the rates and subject to the conditions determined from time to time under the Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973 for part-time holders of public offices:

- i) the "Category 2" daily fee for Council business, including attendance at Council meetings; and
- ii) the "Tier 2" travelling allowance for attending Council business; and

- b. will be eligible for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred on Council business, as approved by the FAS PMD.

Funding and Expenditure

19. We have allocated \$150,000 from the Department's budget for the remainder of 2002-03 to fund the Council's activities, the remuneration of Council members, and other associated expenses. We expect an amount of \$300,000 to be allocated for each of the following two years, subject to budgetary circumstances.

20. The Council's funding will be administered by PMD, and will be allocated to a specially created cost centre. It will be the responsibility of FAS PMD to ensure government accountability requirements are met in relation to the expenditure of funds, the engagement of consultants, and entering into contracts.

21. Subject to the Department's guidelines and a requirement of consistency with the Council's purposes, the Council will also be encouraged and authorised to attract additional revenue by way of sponsorship and other means such as the sale of publications. Such additional revenue will be allocated to the same cost centre as the Council's funding as provided by the Department, and its expenditure will be subject to the same procedures and conditions. The Council will abide by the guidelines set out in Administrative Circular P0199 of 7 May 1999 ("Use of Sponsorship in DFAT").

Meetings and Procedure

22. The Council will meet as necessary for the performance of its functions, but not less than once per year. It is envisaged that the Council will normally meet twice each year. Meetings will be at times and dates agreed by the FAS PMD and the chair or when the Minister requests a meeting to be convened. The first meeting will take place as soon as possible after 1 January 2003.

23. The agenda for the first meeting will be set by the Secretariat in consultation with the chair, and will include determination of procedures for the conduct of meetings and the adoption of the Council's first annual business plan.

24. The agenda for subsequent meetings will be set by the Council, or if the Council determines, by the Secretariat.

25. A quorum will be formed when at least five members of the Council are present.

26. The chair will preside at all meetings at which he or she is present.

27. In the absence of the chair at any meeting, the members present will elect one of their number to preside. The member so elected will be entitled to the remuneration he or she would have received for attendance at that meeting as the chair.

28. Questions arising at a meeting of the Council will be determined by a majority of the votes of members present and voting. Each member present at a meeting of the Council (including the chair or member presiding at the meeting) is entitled to one vote but, in the event of an equality of votes on any question, the chair or member presiding at the meeting also has a casting vote.

29. Should the chair be temporarily unable to carry out functions which he or she may be required to carry out outside of Council meetings, a replacement chair will be appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs with the agreement of the Minister for Trade to carry out those functions.

Annual and Other Reporting

30. On or before 30 September 2003 and each year thereafter, the Council will provide to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade an Annual Report on its activities during the period of twelve months ending on 30 June that year.

31. As all funds relating to the Council will be administered by PMD, that Division will have responsibility for fulfilling all financial reporting requirements in respect of the Council and its activities.

32. All sponsorship will be reported and accounted for in accordance with the government and departmental requirements that apply to DFAT, including those set out in Administrative Circular P0199 of 7 May 1999.

33. The Council must give the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade any additional reports (with or without financial statements) the Ministers from time to time require.

Conduct and Ethics

34. The chair and members of the Council will abide by the principles set out in the *APS Values and Code of Conduct* set out in sections 10 and 13 of the *Public Service Act 1999*, and (where applicable) the Department's *Code of Conduct for Overseas Service*, with the exception that they will not be subject to the Department's disciplinary procedures. In particular, the chair and members of the Council will avoid or disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest, or perception of a conflict of interest.

35. Nothing in paragraph 34 will be taken as conferring any diplomatic or consular immunity, privileges or status.

Peter Varghese
Acting Secretary