

Australian Government Response to Recommendations of the Review of Human Rights and Technical Cooperation Program (December 2006)

Recommendation 1

The Review Team (RT) recommends that the existing method involving gradual accretion of cooperating agencies be retained and that in considering the removal of less well performing agencies a range of approaches that may not involve removal of an agency from the program entirely, receive careful consideration.

Accepted.

Recommendation 2

The RT recommends that the Managing Contractor (MC) actively explore ways to foster the development of ongoing linkages between Australian and Chinese agencies and organisations outside the scope of the Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program (HRTC) and the establishment of new linkages as part of its regular project development and design work.

Accepted.

Recommendation 3

The RT recommends that within the existing thematic areas, the MC should ensure that program development remains responsive to emerging priority areas. The MC should also attempt to keep itself apprised of these as well as any other priorities that may emerge in future through its own research and information exchange with other donor agencies.

Accepted.

Recommendation 4

The RT recommends that when discussing and prioritising programs for each year the MC should retain a sharp focus on the protection of human rights and seek to steer cooperating agencies away from activities without a clear focus on the promotion and protection of human rights and clearly defined human rights outcomes.

Accepted.

Recommendation 5

The RT recommends that the MC continue to give careful consideration to ensuring an appropriate balance between study tours, conferences and workshop type activities, placements that facilitate the 'train the trainer' outcomes, and grass roots activities such as training and pilot programs. In particular the RT recommends exploring greater use of work attachments in suitable situations and with suitable participants.

Accepted.

Recommendation 6

The RT recommends retention of the current time lines for program planning and approval processes.

Accepted.

Recommendation 7

The RT recommends that a 50/50 gender balance be mandatory each year for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) scholarship program provided qualified candidates for admission to an Australian Masters program can be identified within the Ministry.

Accepted.

Recommendation 8(i)

The RT recommends that the MC consult with participants in upcoming activities to obtain information about the nature, extent and content of briefing materials needed to prepare for the activity and develop a plan for effective dissemination of those materials.

Accepted.

Recommendation 8 (ii)

The RT also recommends that the MC engage in greater post activity consultations with Australian participants and provide participants with a copy of the relevant Activity Completion Report on an in confidence basis.

Partially Accepted.

Greater post activity consultation with Australian participants should be undertaken.

Recommendation 9

The RT recommends that the MC review both the content and use of the Logical Framework Matrix, associated Impacts Matrix, Risk Matrix as well as the content of activity designs, addressing the issues highlighted in the HRTC Review.

Accepted.

Recommendation 10(i)

The RT recommends that except as opportunities present themselves where collaboration is initiated by the Chinese counterpart such as the National Population & Family Planning Commission, that donor coordination not be expanded beyond these case by case collaborations.

Accepted.

Recommendation 10(ii)

The RT recommends that MC use its best endeavours to time its regular monitoring visits to China to coincide with the six monthly Human Rights and Law Reform Donor's Roundtable coordinated by the Ford Foundation.

Accepted.

Recommendation 11

The RT recommends that the MC further discuss this proposal with MFA to hold alumni activities and to establish possible operational parameters. It could for example, involve maintaining listing of participants in key study and design visits to Australia, keep them posted on activities taking place (through the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission website) with occasional gatherings in Beijing possibly in conjunction with the Human Rights Dialogue. The objective would be to help maintain long-standing linkages between key program participants, HREOC and MFA staff the Australian embassy.

Accepted in principle.

AusAID and HREOC will explore opportunities to hold alumni activities commensurate with available resources and subject to the commitment of participant agencies.

Recommendation 12(i)

The RT recommends that the location of activities in China continue to be determined on a case by case basis.

Accepted.

Recommendation 12(ii)

The RT recommends that the MC consider broadening the geographical scope of activities in Australia where relevant and appropriate

Accepted.

Recommendation 13

The RT recommends a more active evaluation methodology that may vary according to sector and agency circumstances but that will move beyond deductive reasoning approaches currently mainly applied at activity completion. The proposed approach would seek to establish activity outcomes (rather than impact). Partner agency ownership of the agreed approach would be an important consideration. The MC should discuss monitoring and evaluation options with long-standing partners during future monitoring visits and where considered appropriate some ex-post evaluation activities should in future be costed and built into multi-year activity designs. A range of appropriate techniques could be used. A fundamental objective would be to link such monitoring and evaluation to Strategic Objective 1 and Program Outcome 1.1 of the China-Australia Country Program Strategy. The results of such monitoring and evaluation, clearly identified as such, would be reported in one of the program's current Annual Reports

Accepted.

Recommendation 14

The RT recommends refined reporting specifications in the Record of Understanding (ROU) that will reduce the volume of documentation produced while at the same time providing more meaningful information on activity outcomes and program performance. This includes concise and refined Activity Completion Reports that report more effectively on lessons learnt and activity outcomes and less on implementation detail; a reduced number of reports by incorporating the content of monitoring reports into other reports currently being reduced (sic) and monthly exception reports.

Accepted.

Recommendation 15

The RT recommends that future MFA awards be designated as MFA Australian Development Scholarship (ADS) awards and managed by the China-Australia Governance Program (CAGP) Managing Contractor as an earmarked sub-component of the broader China ADS program. MFA would continue to select the two students and submit its two nominees to the CAGP MC via the Post for processing including placement with other ADS awardees. Payments to students and institutions would be managed by the CAGP MC and Education and Scholarships Taskforce Section in AusAID Canberra. In other words, the China ADS program would be seen as covering 26 rather than 24 awards. Recently introduced China ADS alumni arrangements would apply to the MFA students

Not accepted. The Australian Government wishes to maintain a clear and visible link between scholarships under the HRTC and the Human Rights Dialogue which it considers would be lost if this recommendation was accepted.

Recommendation 16

The RT recommends that the HRTC and CAGP managing contractors meet at least annually (twice a year in year one) firstly to exchange ideas and review lessons learnt about good practice programming approaches and secondly to discuss their respective activity pipelines to ensure that there is no overlap and in the longer term to identify potential complementarities. For the latter, these would be referred to AusAID for further consideration. The RT further recommends that this requirement be included in a future contract amendment for the CAGP MC and in the ROU Annex for the HRTC MC.

Accepted in principle. AusAID will direct CAGP MC to meet with the Program Review Planning Mission team annually. A contract amendment is not required.

Recommendation 17

The RT recommends that AusAID Canberra and AusAID Beijing review current HRTC management arrangements and review the case for devolving management

responsibility for this program to AusAID Beijing consistent with AusAID's strategic project/program management directions.

Noted. AusAID is in the process of reviewing current management arrangements.