



Australian  
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University



# Australian Diplomacy Today Symposium

28 August 2015

Supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



## Outcomes Report

This report summarises the outcomes of the Australian Diplomacy Today Symposium held on Friday 28 August, 2015 jointly organised by the Australian Institute of International Affairs, the Australian National University and Bond University and hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Symposium brought together the small but growing community of practitioners and scholars with an interest in Australian diplomacy to reflect, share ideas and critique recent successes and developments in Australian diplomacy and to consider challenges and opportunities ahead.

Highlights of the Symposium included:

- Twenty-eight knowledgeable and engaging speakers/discussants
- An audience of around 100, including both current and former diplomats and scholars
- Opening statement and engagement from DFAT Secretary Peter Varghese
- Opportunities for networking among those involved in the field of diplomacy
- Dissemination of discussion through a special issue of the *Australian Journal of International affairs*, blog articles, interview, videos and podcasts.

## Format

The Symposium began with a welcome by Professor Michael Wesley, Director, Coral Bell School of Asia-Pacific Affairs at ANU, followed by an opening address by the Secretary of DFAT, Peter Varghese. The Symposium was then divided into four thematic sessions of presentations and practitioner response:

- **Session 1: Forums**

In the first session, Associate Professor Jochen Prantl and Dr. Jeremy Farrall discussed how a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council can influence its decision-making. Tristram Sainsbury from the Lowy Institute presented the challenges faced by Australia's current economic diplomacy. The ANU's Dr. Susan Harris Rimmer discussed the possible consequences and risks of regional organisations such as MIKTA, IORA, ASEAN and TPP. Professor William Maley queried the impact of refugee policies on Australia's international reputation. The session ended with a practitioner response from Michael Bliss and a discussion chaired by Associate Professor Shirley Scott.

- **Session 2: Tools**

The second session opened with a presentation from ANU's Ben Day on the implications for Australian diplomacy of changes in aid policy. ANU's Dr. Jacinta O'Hagan then looked at the role of humanitarian diplomacy. Alex Oliver from the Lowy Institute drew attention to the pressures on the consular service faced by today's Australian diplomats, highlighting the role of changing demographics, travel habits, destinations and the increasing complexity of consular cases. Dr. Alison Broinowski spoke on the transformation of cultural diplomacy. After presentations, former DFAT Deputy Secretary James Batley gave a practitioner response and AIIA ACT Council Member Health McMichael chaired discussion.

- **Session 3: Actors**

In the third session, Michael G. Smith spoke on security sector reform. Janelle Saffin, former member of the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, discussed the role of parliamentarians in diplomacy. Dr. Stuart Murray from Bond University focused on sports diplomacy, examining the potential of a dedicated, innovative and ministerial-supported strategy. Diane Stone of Warwick University called for attention to the potential of diaspora networks. The session's practitioner responses came from Robert Tranter and Jon Philp from DFAT. The discussion was chaired by AIIA ACT Branch Council Member Miles Kupa.

- **Session 4: Themes**

The last session opened with Dr. Caitlin Byrne of Bond University characterising Australia's public diplomacy as like a cha-cha-cha dance: two steps forward, two steps backward and two to the side. Melissa Conley Tyler, National Executive Director of the AIIA, spoke on diversity in diplomacy and DFAT's Indigenous Recruitment and Career Development Strategy. Former diplomat William Fisher examined how states deal with the relationship between morality, national interests and decency. The final session closed with the practitioner response by ANU Professor Ramesh Thakur and a discussion chaired by AIIA ACT Branch Council Member Garth Hunt. John McCarthy, National President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, delivered the closing remarks.

## Feedback

Feedback indicated that the Symposium was a great success, with participants rating the overall quality of the Symposium as 4.5 out of 5 and the speakers as 4.7 out of 5.

Participants assessed the event very positively. The quality of the general discussion was rated highly, with many participants appreciating the frank and lively exchange of ideas. Comments included:

- “Increased my understanding of the breadth of modern diplomacy”
- “I particularly appreciated having practitioner responses and to learn about how DFAT is responding to challenges and problems identified both within and by outside commentators”
- “Intellectually very stimulating. Didn’t necessarily expect to learn new things but I did as well as gaining great insights”
- “Excellent speakers plus great opportunity to network and discuss ideas”
- “Broadened and deepened – or perhaps most importantly brought me up to date”
- “Given me some insights into what insiders are doing and thinking”
- “The expert knowledge but particularly the DFAT practitioner responses”
- “Rich diversity of views and a great intro by Peter Varghese”
- “Tremendous impact on my diplomatic studies”
- “It was a wonderful insight that would have been difficult to access independently. It was really worth the time and travel”

Participants expressed interest in participating in future years and the value of the publication being developed based upon the day’s discussions.

## Outreach

The Symposium was recorded and will be disseminated in the following ways:

- Recordings of each session will be made available through the [Media Library](#) on the Australian Institute of International Affairs website.
- An interview with Professor William Maley, Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, has been published on the Australian Institute of International Affairs’ [Australian Outlook blog](#).
- Blog articles are being commissioned from a number of participants on issues discussed during the Symposium. These articles will be published on the [Australian Outlook blog](#).
- Selected papers will be published in a special issue of the *Australian Journal of International Affairs* in 2016.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to:

- all participants in the Symposium as well all presenters, responders, chairs and discussants. DFAT Secretary Peter Varghese should be particularly acknowledged for the time he gave.
- the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Public Diplomacy Division for its support. The AIIA, ANU and Bond thank all of the staff who assisted this event.
- AIIA staff and the volunteer team of Anna Willis, Yang Jie, Alexander Dudley and Rory Macneil.
- The co-organisers of this event, Melissa Conley Tyler, Susan Harris Rimmer and Caitlin Byrne.