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CHAPTER THREE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The basic principles underlying the shaping and conduct of Australia's foreign policy are that Australia is a significant middle-level power with democratic institutions; having strong affiliations with other Western countries but an emerging Asia-Pacific identity through its increasing regional involvement.

Australia's prosperity is largely dependent on trade; it is geographically remote from its founding nation and principal migration source countries and from some of its major markets and its main allies; it is a relatively affluent and resource rich country in a populous, developing and rapidly changing region.

Initially, Britain and the Commonwealth countries were a central element of Australia's foreign policy and activity. Later, as a consequence of the pre-eminence of the United States in the west and the Pacific during and following World War II, close relations were developed with that country.

While these links, and links with Europe, remain important factors in Australian foreign policy in terms of cultural tradition, security, strategic interests and trade, the specific focus of policy has shifted in the past 25 years to the Asia-Pacific region.

Australia is located in a region which includes the politically, economically and strategically significant countries of East Asia, South Asia, the Indian Ocean and many newly independent nations of the South Pacific. Awareness of the importance of these neighbouring states has led successive Australian Governments to seek to promote and maintain friendly and co-operative relations with them, not only to ensure the stability and security of the region, but also to develop mutually profitable trade, investment, exchange of technology, and co-operation in the development process. Australia gives special attention to its relations with China, Japan, ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations) and its members, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the other South Pacific states.

Australia has also been concerned at the increasing instability in the world strategic environment, particularly in South West Asia, Indo-China, the Middle East and Africa, and also at the urgency of the need for effective arms control and a reduction in East-West tensions. Australian foreign policy is committed to an independent constructive approach to those central issues within the framework of the Western alliance.

International issues including economic, disarmament, resources, human rights, refugees, North-South relations, and new concepts of national interest have assumed importance together with an increasing recognition of the growing interdependence of the world community. This is reflected in economic issues, disarmament and arms control and human rights becoming priorities in Australia's foreign policy. Australia recognises the importance and growing complexity of economic issues, particularly the slow recovery of world trade and economic development and the major problem of world debt affecting both developed and developing countries. The growing interdependence of national economic and foreign policies and the increasing vulnerability of Australia's economy to international trade and other developments will remain at the heart of Australia's foreign policy concerns for some time to come. Australia places a high priority on its participation in the resolution of these global issues in the United Nations and other multilateral forums, including the Commonwealth.

The United Nations

Successive Australian Governments have reaffirmed their support for the United Nations (UN), its Charter and the work being done in the various specialised agencies. Within the United Nations and other organisations, Australia seeks to work toward the solution of the pressing problems confronting humanity today.

Australia is involved in a wide range of United Nations matters and has served on many United Nations bodies. It was a member of the Security Council in 1945-46, 1956-57 and

1973-74 and was elected for a further term in 1985-86. The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In 1975, a long period of Australian membership of the Trusteeship Council came to an end with the independence of Papua New Guinea. Australia was a long-standing member of the Special Committee on Decolonisation until its withdrawal in January 1985 following UN recognition of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands' decision to integrate with Australia. Australia remains a member of the UN Council for Namibia.

Australia supports the work of the specialised agencies and subsidiary bodies in such areas as development assistance, drug control and human rights. It is an active participant in the economic work of the United Nations, through such forums as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Food Program (WFP), the UN Development Program (UNDP), and the UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). Australia also takes an active part in regional consideration of social and economic issues in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations regional body. Australia is a member of the Commission on the Status of Women. It was re-elected for a further four year term on the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in June 1985. It is on the Executive Board of the UN Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the Governing Council of the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and is a long-standing member of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation. Australia is an active member of the UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and its prominent role in world refugee assistance is reflected in membership of the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Australia has made a significant contribution to UN peacekeeping activities since these began. Australia has also contributed its assessed share of the costs of all UN operations, and makes voluntary contributions as well as providing personnel and equipment for peacekeeping forces. At present Australia provides personnel for the UN forces in Cyprus.

Australia is fully involved in the work of the UN on disarmament and outer space, and is a member of the main subsidiary bodies working in these areas.

Australia accepts the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and plays an active role in bodies concerned with the development of international law.

The Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is a distinctive and unique framework which brings together about a quarter of the world's population in 48 countries. Australia through its participation in the broad range of Commonwealth activities, seeks to foster the Commonwealth as an instrument for peace and understanding, and for political, social and economic advancement. Australia hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Melbourne in September-October 1981.

South East Asia

Australia maintains wide-ranging relations with the countries of ASEAN (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Brunei), both bilaterally and as a group. These relationships include political, commercial, cultural, defence and wide-ranging personal contacts. There is extensive contact at the senior political level with regular Ministerial visits in both directions.

Australia maintained its regular contact with ASEAN at the level of Foreign Minister at the annual ASEAN Ministerial Meeting-Post Ministerial Conference, which the Australian Foreign Minister attended in Singapore in June 1987.

Relations between Brunei and Australia are developing steadily, especially in the fields of trade, defence and education co-operation. Resource-rich in oil but with limited technical skills, Brunei is beginning to regard Australia as a country from which training assistance can be sought as a purchased commodity. Australia is finding a more internationally active Brunei to be a valued partner in the region.

Indonesia is Australia's closest regional neighbour and straddles its major sea and air routes. Accordingly, Australia has pursued an active relationship with Indonesia, in the areas of commerce, investment, science, defence and culture, and has provided since 1974 over \$510 million in bilateral aid. Despite the difficulties that have arisen from time to time,

Australia is committed to the maintenance of sound and productive relations with Indonesia at all levels. Efforts are currently underway to explore areas which offer further possibilities for constructive bilateral co-operation, including co-operation on international economic issues where interests coincide. The development of a more substantial trade and commercial relationship also remains a high priority.

Malaysia and Australia have a long history of close and constructive relations, covering the full range of political, commercial and social links. This relationship has adapted well to the political and economic changes within the region, including Malaysia's emergence as a dynamic economic power.

The individual components of the bilateral relationship cover a broad spectrum, notably education, trade and investment, defence and civil aviation. From Australia's view point, Malaysia's level of economic development heightens the advantages of good bilateral relations.

The Philippines is important to Australia because of its strategic location. The bilateral relationship is broadly based. Australia has a substantial development assistance program with the Philippines, and there are important linkages through trade, migration, tourism and defence co-operation.

Australia and Thailand share a range of political, strategic and economic interests, founded on Australia's regional foreign policy interests covering both the South East Asia region and Indo-China. Co-operation in efforts directed against the United States and the European Community subsidisation practices has been an important new aspect of the relationship. Australia's relationship with Thailand is given added substance through development assistance activities, defence co-operation, growing trade links, tourism and co-operation in narcotics control.

Australia has a tradition of close interest in and association with Singapore. Current relations are dominated by the economic and political success of the Republic and the prospect of considerable opportunities for the promotion of Australia's interests. Relations are broadly based, encompassing the whole range of bilateral areas including trade and investment, defence, education, civil aviation, tourism and cultural relations. The major investment links that Australia and Singapore share have contributed to the frequency of exchanges between political leaders and officials of the two countries.

Australia's contribution to the ASEAN organisation underpins its bilateral relations with its member countries. Australia has now committed over \$100 million since 1974, to the ASEAN-Australia Economic Co-operation Program which includes a diversity of projects. In 1986 the program was reviewed to give more focus and more relevance to regional needs.

Australia has developed a strong relationship with Burma. Australia's development assistance program is the central feature of the relationship, with \$11.7 million allocated in 1987-88.

Australia is concerned by the destabilising effects on the South East Asia region posed by existing disputes. Australia's policy has been to promote dialogue between the major parties in order to reach a peaceful and durable settlement.

Australia is also developing a more mature and comprehensive relationship with Vietnam in the fields of cultural exchanges, trade and aid through multilateral and non-government channels. It is also continuing to develop its relationship with Laos and is providing a small program of development assistance.

Asia

Australia believes that peace and prosperity in Asia depend largely on the countries in the region to co-operate to secure these objectives and in ensuring that no major power, either inside or outside the region, is able to exert an undue influence in the area.

Australia's primary interest and concern in Asia has long been reflected in its vigorous role in regional association and organisations such as the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Colombo Plan, the Asian Development Bank and in many other organisations, both private and government. Australia has also been active in the promotion of regional economic co-operation, in particular through involvement in the Pacific Economic Co-operation conference which held its fifth conference in Vancouver in November 1986.

Japan is by far Australia's largest trading partner and a significant source of investment funds, with total trade now in excess of \$12,500 million a year. The relationship with Japan

is based on complementary economic interests and shared perceptions of international issues. Relations in political, cultural, scientific, sporting and other areas are being fostered by both governments. The then Japanese Prime Minister, Mr Nakasone, accompanied by Foreign Minister, Mr Abe visited Australia in January 1985, reciprocating Mr Hawke's visit to Japan as Prime Minister in January-February 1984. A large number of Ministerial visits between the two countries have taken place in the last year. The ninth Australia Japan Ministerial Committee Meeting was held in Canberra in January 1987. Eight Australian Ministers, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs, attended the meeting which focused on political and strategic issues for the first time.

Australia attaches a high priority to its relations with China. The bilateral relationship has expanded rapidly in the last few years, and now covers a broad range of contacts in many areas. Trade is substantial, and there are exchanges in culture, science, agriculture, education, legal affairs, business management and industrial technology, and the media. The Australia-China Council is active in sponsoring a variety of activities designed to provide a strong, broad foundation for the bilateral relationship. Australia and China engage in frequent political consultations, a process which has been facilitated by an exchange of high-level visits. In April 1983 Australia hosted a visit by China's Premier, Mr Zhao Ziyang, the first Chinese Head of Government to visit Australia, a visit reciprocated by Prime Minister Hawke in February 1984. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Hayden, visited China in August 1983, and there were visits by eight Australian Ministers to China during 1984. In April 1985, Mr Hu Yaobang, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, visited Australia. High level visits are now very regular, and consideration is currently being given to enhancing the bilateral relationship at all levels. Australia's development assistance program to China has grown rapidly since the conclusion of a technical co-operation agreement in 1981.

Australia also recognises the strategic, economic and political importance of the countries of South East Asia. Although outside Australia's immediate area of strategic concern, these countries sit astride major Australian shipping, civil aviation and communication links. Australia has close relations with all the countries of the region and has recently sought to upgrade relations with them, especially India, which is the most militarily powerful country in the Indian Ocean, the world's most populous democracy, a leading member of the Third World and among the world's largest in terms of industrial output. Australia welcomed in October 1986 the visit of the Indian Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi.

The Australian Government does not recognise the present Afghan regime ('the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan'), and has called for the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Australia has also expressed concern about nuclear proliferation in the region. The Australian Government welcomed the signing of an agreement in July 1987 between India and Sri Lanka, aimed at a settlement of the Sri Lankan communal problem.

South Pacific

Australia seeks to consolidate and expand its co-operative activities in order to promote the stability, welfare, harmony and economic development of the region. Australia has deliberately moved to develop and extend its bilateral relations with the Island countries, and now has nine diplomatic and consular missions in the area. Australia's aid program in the South Pacific takes account of the special needs of small island nations. A five-year forward indicative planning figure of \$300 million for aid to the South Pacific (excluding Papua New Guinea) was approved by the Government in 1983. A further amount for defence co-operation projects in the countries of the South West Pacific was allocated for 1983-84. In 1986-87, \$13.068 million was allocated including \$5.850 million for the provision of patrol boats for a number of these countries.

As the largest of the South Pacific Island States, Papua New Guinea (PNG) has played an influential and leading role in the region since independence. Australia and PNG have a close and warm relationship which encompasses a broad range of government and non-government activities. Papua New Guinea is the major recipient of Australian aid. Discussions are proceeding between Papua New Guinea and Australian officials on a joint declaration of principles to govern this special relationship. In 1986-87, Papua New Guinea received \$326 million in development assistance. The bulk of this was provided in the form of untied budgetary assistance.

Australia is a member of the South Pacific Forum, the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC) and the South Pacific Commission (SPC), and has become a member of the Forum Fisheries Agency and the other regional intergovernmental organisation, the Committee for Co-ordination of Mineral Resources in South Pacific Off-Shore Areas (CCOP/SOPAC). Australia takes part in meetings of these organisations and the many other regional meetings held in the Pacific to act on a broad range of issues of common interests. Besides contributions to SPEC and the SPC, financial support for other regional and international programs developed in the South Pacific is being maintained. Australia has also established a fund to promote the preservation and development of Pacific cultures. Australia and New Zealand have entered into a non-reciprocal preferential trade agreement in favour of South Pacific Forum States; the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement (SPARTECA). Australia took part in the 18th South Pacific Forum held in Apia, Western Samoa. Australia is a party to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (the Treaty of Rarotonga) which entered into force in December 1986.

Relations between Australia and New Zealand are based on shared history, close economic ties and often common approaches to dealing with the current international political and economic environment. Although Australia disagrees with New Zealand's policy on port and air access, other areas of the relationship remain close: the Australia New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement (ANZCERTA), signed in March 1983 and designed to assist both countries to expand their mutual economic and trading links, is a particular demonstration of this. The Australia New Zealand Foundation is another. Both countries are now giving close consideration to the review of ANZCERTA scheduled in the agreement for 1988. The Review will consider both the operation of the Agreement since it commenced and ways in which the further development of the economic relationship might be advanced.

The Americas

Australia has a long-standing relationship with the United States which extends across the whole range of national life. Government-to-government relations are one part of a larger and more extensive interaction between the two societies with interlinked culture and language. In general, relations between the countries are warm and co-operative, with a high degree of official consultation and a close personal relationship between the leaders. The affinity is underpinned by substantial economic and commercial relations which, however, have occasional difficulties.

Canada is a country comparable with Australia in terms of institutions and traditions, geographical size, and international outlook. This has allowed a close degree of co-operation and interchange of ideas between the two countries. Developments in the Caribbean and the Latin American region are of increasing importance to Australia.

Europe

Australia seeks to maintain warm and friendly relations with the countries of Western Europe, with the European Community and its institutions, including the European Parliament.

Bilateral relations with individual Western European countries continue to be of considerable importance. These relations are promoted by the very close cultural and historical links with these countries, and are reinforced by similar approaches to international issues and a shared commitment to democratic values and human rights. Economic ties between Australia and the major Western European economies are likely to be significantly strengthened with the increase of European investment in Australia and the increase in the export of Australian energy resources to Europe.

The European Community (EC) is an important trading partner and a major source of investment funds and technological expertise, as well as a significant importer of Australian raw materials. This natural complementary relationship has however been tempered by tensions caused by trading difficulties in the agricultural sector. Australia nonetheless remains committed to the strengthening of a positive relationship with the EC on the principle of enlightened self-interest.

The fourth round of regular EC-Australian ministerial consultations provided opportunities for Australia to express its concern over EC agricultural politics. The Europeans have to some extent responded by restricting beef exports to traditional Australian markets in South East Asia.

Following the Government's decision in May 1983 to normalise relations with the U.S.S.R., activities have been restored or initiated across a broad range, contributing to the objective of a pragmatic and constructive relationship. Trade has developed and agreement has been reached on renewed programs of exchanges in culture, science and technology.

Eastern Europe is a sensitive area in world affairs and Australia has an interest in the maintenance of a balanced East-West relationship. Eastern Europe has significant potential for Australian exports, particularly commodity exports, although there have been significant debt problems emerging in some Eastern European countries in recent years. The presence in Australia of large ethnic groups, many of which have family in Eastern Europe, has raised the question of freedom of emigration from those countries.

Australia now has diplomatic relations with all countries of Eastern Europe, following the accreditation of the Australian Ambassador in Belgrade to Albania in September 1984.

The Middle East

Australia has substantial trading interests in the area and long-standing friendly relations with the Arab nations, Iran and Israel. Australia supports efforts to bring about negotiations of differences in the region, e.g. in such areas of conflict as the Arab-Israel dispute, the problems facing Lebanon and the Iran-Iraq war. Australia supported the Camp David accords and the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, seeing them as a first step towards a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute. Australia supports all efforts to negotiate the dispute, and believes a settlement should be based on UN Security Council Resolution 242 (which, inter alia, recognises the right of all States in the area to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries and calls on Israel to withdraw from territories captured in 1967) and on recognition of the central importance of the Palestinian issue, including the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people and, if they so choose, the right to independence and the possibility of their own independent State. The Government recognises, however that any such arrangement will depend on decisions involving people of the immediate region. Australia maintains a strict policy of neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war, supporting the UN Security Council in its objective of a ceasefire without preconditions or a comprehensive settlement. This should include a withdrawal of forces to the international boundary, respect for territorial integrity and an end to further attacks by either side. The Australian contingent in the Sinai Multi-national Force and Observers (MFO) which monitors the Egypt-Israel border area was withdrawn in April 1986.

Africa

Australia maintains a broad range of contacts with independent black African States, and is closely concerned with developmental and humanitarian issues affecting Africa. Its strong and continuing opposition to racial discrimination and the apartheid system is reflected by its adherence to the Commonwealth statement on Apartheid in Sport (the Gleneagles Declaration), its adoption of all measures against South Africa agreed by Commonwealth Heads of Government at Nassau (1985) and London (1986) and its active role in encouraging peaceful change in South Africa, most recently through the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. Australia is ready to join concerted international efforts to bring further pressure to bear on the South African Government to abolish apartheid, which it regards as an inhuman practice and the root cause of confrontation and violence in Southern Africa. Australia maintains correct but cool diplomatic relations with South Africa. Australia also supports international action to bring Namibia to independence by the negotiated settlement in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 435. Australian aid to Africa is focussed on Eastern and Southern Africa. This includes assistance given through the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference as well as humanitarian assistance for refugees from apartheid in South Africa and Namibia. Food aid constitutes the dominant share of Australian aid to Africa because of growing food deficits and the continuing famine crisis in Ethiopia and Mozambique.

Indian Ocean

On 17 January 1984, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Hayden, announced that the Government had approved guidelines for a comprehensive and integrated policy approach to Indian Ocean issues. Under the guidelines Australia will: act in accordance with its status as

an independent but aligned Indian Ocean Littoral State; continue to play an active role in the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean; maintain the goal of the resumption of United States-Soviet talks on arms limitations in the region; and support other arms limitations initiatives where these accord with Australia's assessment of its own interests and those of the region as a whole. Australia will also seek to give greater attention to the development of relations with Indian Ocean island States, and, to a lesser extent, East African States. Australia maintains a modest aid program to the smaller Indian Ocean countries.

ANZUS

Following a review in 1983 of the ANZUS Treaty by the Australian Government, including a re-examination with its ANZUS partners at the 1983 ANZUS Council Meeting in Washington, the Government reaffirmed the alliance as fundamental to Australia's national security and foreign and defence policies. The text of the ANZUS Treaty of 1952 can be found in Treaty Series No. 2, for 1952, printed by the then Department of External Affairs. In early 1985, the New Zealand Government implemented a policy not to permit the entry to New Zealand of nuclear powered warships or of warships (or aircraft) which might carry nuclear weapons. Consequently the United States, at the Australia-U.S. ministerial talks in August 1986, formally suspended its security obligations to New Zealand under the ANZUS Treaty pending adequate corrective measures. Both the United States and Australia agreed that the relationship between the United States and Australia under the ANZUS Treaty and the rights and obligations assumed by the United States and Australia towards each other under the Treaty would remain constant and undiminished. ANZUS continues to govern the bilateral defence relationship between Australia and the United States, and that between Australia and New Zealand.

Nuclear issues

Australia's strong commitment to effective disarmament and arms control is reflected in Australian support for the international non-proliferation regime. Australia ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1973 and encourages universal adherence to it. Australia is also a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and, as a member of the IAEA, supports endeavours to strengthen the IAEA's international safeguards system. Australia plays an active role in IAEA committees and in other international bodies dealing with the clarification of multilaterally agreed guidelines on export controls for non-proliferation purposes.

Australia also took an active part in the development of two new important international nuclear safety conventions under IAEA auspices in 1986; the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident (CENNA) and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency (CACNARE). Australia has signed both conventions, and is taking steps to ratify.

The stringent nuclear safeguards conditions applied to exports and subsequent use of Australian uranium are set out as binding international legal obligations in the bilateral nuclear safeguards agreements which customer countries must enter into before any uranium exports from Australia are permitted. These conditions include an undertaking not to use Australian origin nuclear material for any military or explosive purpose, and the acceptance of IAEA safeguards in order to verify that undertaking. Australia has concluded eleven bilateral nuclear safeguards agreements covering nineteen countries.

Australia is also a member of the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Australia values the NEA as an essentially technical forum for international consultation on nuclear issues.

Disarmament and arms control

Australia is energetically promoting arms control and disarmament objectives at the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. In July 1983 the Government announced the appointment of Australia's first Ambassador for Disarmament whose principal role is to represent Australia on the Conference on Disarmament and at other disarmament forums. Australia attaches particular priority to the earliest possible conclusion

of a treaty banning all nuclear testing by all States in all environments for all time (a Comprehensive Test Ban) and is working to uphold and strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Although not a party to any negotiations on reductions of nuclear weapons between the United States and the U.S.S.R., Australia continues to encourage genuine dialogue and a readiness to find accommodation with the aim of stable mutual deterrence. It has called for early agreement on arms reductions and related outer space issues in the current Geneva negotiations. Australia seeks a balanced, mutual and verifiable freeze on the production, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons, which would be followed by deep reductions in nuclear weapons stockpiles. Australia was at the forefront of efforts within the Pacific region which resulted in the endorsement and opening for signature of a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty during the meeting of the South Pacific Forum in Rarotonga, Cook Islands in August 1985. Australia also accords priority to a number of non-nuclear disarmament questions. It is committed to supporting the conclusion of a fully effective and verifiable chemical warfare convention that would outlaw the use of chemicals as weapons. Australia will be active in efforts aimed at strengthening the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention by improving its verification provisions. Australia is concerned at the implications for strategic stability of the research into ballistic missile defences being conducted by both superpowers and is pressing for international agreements to prevent an arms race in outer space. Australia has acceded to the following disarmament and arms control agreements: the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the Geneva Protocol (on the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating Poisonous or Other Gases and of Bacteriological Weapons), the Outer Space Treaty, the Sea-Bed Arms Control Treaty, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Environmental Modification Convention, the Antarctic Treaty, and the Inhumane Weapons Convention. Australia was the first signatory to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty on 6 August (Hiroshima Day) 1985.

Economic relations

Economic factors have assumed primary importance in international relations. This is largely due to the growing economic interdependence between nations and the need for global co-operation to solve the problems facing domestic economies, particularly at a time of world recession.

Australia's interest in international economic developments derives from the overall importance of trade to Australia and its historical reliance upon a substantial amount of capital inflow to offset balance of payments deficits on the current account.

The economic recession of the world economy in the 1970s and 1980s has led to the growth world-wide of protectionist pressures and moves towards seeking solutions to economic problems through bilateralism and the formation of trade blocs. The Australian Government has endeavoured to counter these harmful trends and to encourage freer trade through its involvement in forums such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). GATT is the principal multilateral institution for negotiation of reduction in trade barriers in pursuit of the further liberalisation of world trade. Australia has consistently supported a reduction in barriers to trade and the concept of an open and multilateral trading system, and is playing an active role in the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. In particular, Australia took steps which led to the formation of the 14 member Cairns Group of Fair Traders in Agriculture, which has established itself as an effective proponent of reform in international agricultural trade.

Australia also has a strong commitment to the freedom of international capital flows. Because it is a net capital importer, it is of considerable importance to Australia that the international system be increasingly open and adaptable to facilitate the global exchange of goods, services, labour and capital. This is all the more so in view of the significant challenges imposed on the international monetary system by the dramatic changes in the world economy during the past decade.

Because of its characteristics and location, Australia is vitally dependent on its aviation, shipping and communication links with the rest of the world. Civil aviation has assumed particular prominence in Australia's relations with a large number of countries. Australia's international airline, Qantas, has a well-established network linking Australia with Asia, Oceania, North America, Europe and Africa. Shipping is also of major importance and the maintenance of Australia's interests in the shipping and aviation fields requires a conducive atmosphere in both bilateral and multilateral negotiations.

Australia attaches great importance to its traditional relations with other developed countries, which continue to be Australia's principal trading partners. Membership of the OECD has enabled Australia to take part in consultations on a wide range of policy issues and on issues of international concern with countries experiencing similar social and economic circumstances. At the 1987 Ministerial Council Meeting, Australia played a key role in ensuring that member countries accepted the need for urgent agricultural reform. Macroeconomic and structural policy outcomes, combined with trade and agricultural commitments made at the meeting gave a positive impetus to these issues at the Venice Summit in June 1987. The OECD meeting outcome should also give a significant boost to the Uruguay Round process. The Organisation's role in developing its members' policies on relations with developing countries also makes it an important element in Australia's foreign policy. Australia is a member of the International Energy Agency, which has developed into the major forum for continuing consultation and co-operation on energy matters between most of the major industrialised nations which are Australia's principal trading partners.

Law of the Sea

Australia participated in all sessions of the Law of the Sea Conference, the largest and potentially the most important conference in the history of the United Nations, involving major strategic, economic, transport, scientific and environmental issues. The Convention opened for signature on 10 December 1982 and Australia signed that day. It had attracted 158 other signatures by the time it closed for signature two years later. The Convention will enter into force twelve months after it receives 60 ratifications or accessions. The text includes articles on the system of exploration and exploitation of the deep seabed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction; extension of the territorial sea to 12 nautical miles; establishment of coastal state sovereign rights in the living and non-living resources of an "exclusive economic zone" of 200 nautical miles; recognition of coastal state sovereign rights over the exploration and exploitation of the natural resources of the continental shelf, defined in terms of the natural prolongation of the land-mass; protection and preservation of the marine environment; marine scientific research; and the settlement of disputes. Rights of freedom of navigation and passage through straits and archipelagos, which are important to trading nations such as Australia, are also recognized. A preparatory commission for the establishment of the International Seabed Authority and its various organs has been meeting biannually since 1983. Australia has been an active participant in its work.

Antarctica

Australia has had a long association with Antarctica commencing with early expeditions and continuing with an active scientific program. Antarctica's importance to Australia derives from its geographical proximity, the history of Australia involvement there and Australian administration of the Australian Antarctic Territory. Australia maintains three permanent bases in the Territory at Casey, Davis and Mawson (as well as one on Macquarie Island).

As one of the twelve original signatories, Australia attaches particular significance to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, which serves important Australian scientific, environmental and security interests. Australia hosted the first Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Canberra in 1961. Such meetings are held about every two years in one of the Consultative Party States, and in 1983 Australia was host to the twelfth meeting. There are now sixteen Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties.

In 1980, at a conference in Canberra, a Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources was concluded. Annual meetings of the Commission and the Scientific Committee established by the Convention have been held at the Commission's headquarters in Hobart since 1982. The Commission is the first international organisation to be established in Australia. Australia has also participated in a series of special consultative meetings to negotiate a regime to regulate the exploration and exploitation of Antarctic minerals.

Treaties

The texts of bilateral and multilateral treaties to which Australia becomes a party are printed in the Australian Treaty Series when they enter into force. The most recent consolidation of the Australian Treaty List was published as Treaty Series 1979, No. 1.

Australia's current position with regard to individual treaties may be ascertained by referring to the 1971 list in conjunction with Cumulative Supplement No. 4 (Treaty Series 1982, No. 10), annual volumes on treaty action in the Treaty Series, and annual volumes on International Treaties and Conventions to which Australia has not yet become a party, in the series 'Select Documents on International Affairs'. These publications are available from Commonwealth Government Bookshops in State capital cities.

Cultural relations

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade administers a program of cultural relations overseas known as the Australia Abroad Program. This program supports Australian foreign policy and economic objectives through cultural activities and exchanges. These include tours overseas of all types of performing and visual arts, promotion of Australian literature and literary studies, promotion of general Australian studies, cultural assistance, visitor exchange, book gifts, and sporting gifts and exchanges. Formal priorities have been established for the program, with major emphasis on South East Asia, the South Pacific, North and East Asia, South Asia and Indian Ocean countries. There are also continuing programs in the United States of America and in the U.S.S.R.

Normally, programs are handled as part of the overall bilateral relations with various countries. Cultural agreements have been signed with China, France, Greece, India, Indonesia, Iran (no longer operative), Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Romania, Singapore, Thailand, the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia.

The Department collaborates closely with other departments, institutions and agencies in the development of the Australia Abroad Program. Its role as co-ordinator of Australian official cultural projects overseas has been endorsed by the Government. The Department seeks to build up programs which will increase understanding and comprehension overseas of Australian society and culture, and thus help foster a favourable environment for the promotion of foreign policy goals. At the same time it seeks to promote professional opportunities for Australian practitioners in all cultural and sporting fields.

Australian foreign aid program 1987-88

The principal objective of the Australian aid program is to promote the economic and social development of developing countries, particularly in our neighbourhood. However, the Australian aid program is also framed with Australian political and economic interests firmly in sight. Australia's foreign policy and bona fides are enhanced by our status as an aid donor. There is also every reason why Australian industry should take part in our aid program, so long as equity and effectiveness remain the primary considerations. The Government, in other words, maintains a balance in the aid program between humanitarian concerns and our political and economic interests.

The effectiveness of Australia's aid program has been reinforced by the continued implementation of changes in the agency responsible for administering the program, the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB).

Australia uses a variety of channels to maximise the impact of its aid using three sub-programs as the main channels and, in 1987-88, it will provide \$1,008 million as official development assistance. Of this, \$669 million will be provided through its Country Programs. These programs are designed to promote development in designated countries by assisting governments and regional organisations in the planning and implementation of programs and activities to improve economic and social conditions.

Some \$271 million has been allocated to Global Programs which aim to promote co-ordinated Australian and international efforts to assist development in Third World countries. They also aim to promote understanding of aid and development issues in the Australian community and to alleviate the suffering of refugees and victims of disaster.

Country Programs

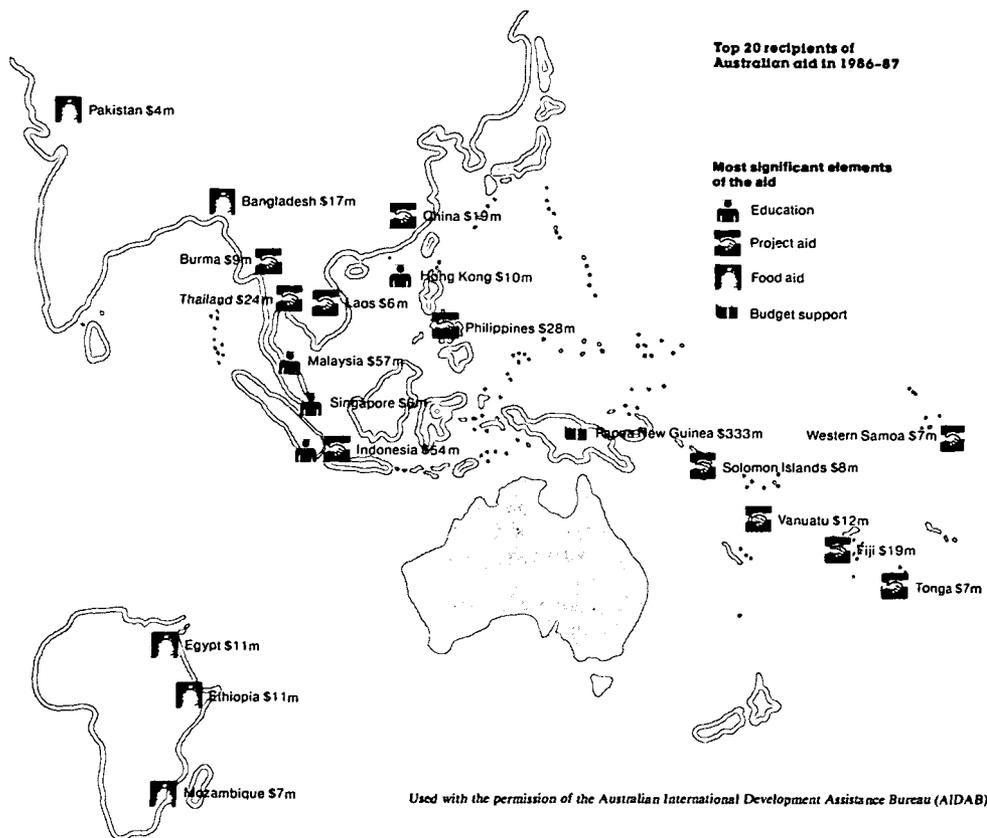
The Australian Government currently provides aid directly to a total of over 90 countries. However, in line with Australia's geopolitical and economic interests, emphasis is placed on providing support to nearby countries in the South Pacific and South East Asian regions.

Most of Australia's direct aid to developing countries other than Papua New Guinea is for specific development activities which range from larger regional development programs to small village projects.

The introduction of country programming of aid has been given high priority to improve the delivery of aid to individual countries.

Strategies for Australian aid are designed in consultation with recipient governments to devise a program which is a mix of project, training, food aid and other forms of aid that both reflect Australia's capacity to assist and which best suit the needs of the recipient country. Support is also provided to individual countries through organisations and programs which focus on regional development activities.

TYPE, VALUE AND DISTRIBUTION OF AUSTRALIAN AID



Australia's training program is designed to help recipient countries develop the human resources they need for their economic and social advancement. Governments may nominate candidates for formal postgraduate academic studies at Australian tertiary institutions or short practical courses funded by AIDAB, including those offered by the Bureau's International Training Institute. Other forms of assistance include institution support, placements at regional institutions and country specific training packages undertaken either in Australia or in-country. In 1987-88, the estimate of contributions towards the education of developing country students is \$85.2 million.

Australia is responding to world food problems in two ways: by addressing the short-term problem of food shortages with food aid; and by helping developing countries supply more of their own food requirements through the provision of appropriate long-term development assistance. In 1987-88, Australia is expected to spend \$88 million on its food aid program.

Papua New Guinea and South Pacific

Papua New Guinea has been allocated \$301 million in 1987-88. Most of this assistance will be provided in the form of direct budget support grants. This support is expected to represent about 23 per cent of total PNG budget receipts or around 80 per cent of its expected total aid receipts. As agreed between the PNG and Australian Governments, there will be a continuation of the movement away from this form of aid towards direct support of individual aid activities including project aid, education and training, assistance for students and co-financing with international agencies and development banks.

Australia's aid program in the South Pacific (\$68 million in 1987-88) extends to Fiji (although assistance was suspended in 1987 following political turmoil in that country), Solomon Island, Western Samoa, Vanuatu, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Cook Islands and Niue. It also includes aid provided on a multi-country or regional basis.

1987-88 marks the last year of the five year pledge of an Indicative Planning Figure (IPF) of \$300 million made to the Pacific Island countries at the 1982 Rotorua Forum.

South East Asia

Australia provides a broad range of forms of assistance to the region, including project aid, training assistance for students, co-financing and technical assistance supporting over 60 projects in South East Asia. A total of \$118 million has been allocated in 1987-88 for the region.

Indonesia, with an allocation of \$44 million, is the largest recipient of project aid. Other major recipients of bilateral aid under the South East Asia program are the Philippines (\$24 million) and Thailand (\$20 million).

Support is also provided for regional organisations and programs, e.g. the ASEAN-Australia Economic Co-operation Program (AAECP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

The success of the aid program in South East Asia has reinforced Australia's reputation as a developed country with a genuine concern for the welfare and development of its regional neighbours.

Other regions

Australian assistance to other regions of the world is concentrated on much more specific economic sectors in which Australia has particular expertise and will total \$85 million in 1987-88. Of this, \$18 million has been allocated to China where the aim of Australia's aid program is to assist the Chinese people's social and economic advancement through modernisation.

The aid program in Burma has been allocated \$11.7 million while in Southern Africa Australia will embark on a three year program of aid at an estimated total cost of \$55 million. This will provide for assistance to the nine member states of the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) to the SADCC organisation itself and to expand the Special Assistance Program for black South Africans and Namibians.

Other regions and countries benefiting from Australian aid are the Indian Ocean island states and Egypt where food aid continues to be the significant component of the aid program.

International organisations and programs

As a responsible member of the international aid community, Australia accepts its obligations to support a range of key international financial and development institutions. These organisations can provide aid on a scale or in sectors which may not be appropriate for a single donor. Australia's active participation in these agencies enables it to have a policy influence on each institution's activities, as well as to make use of their particular expertise in formulating Australia's own aid strategies and programs. It also allows Australia to provide assistance in areas which are outside its sphere of technical expertise, comparative advantage or access.

In 1987-88, Australian contributions, administered by AIDAB, to international organisations will be \$166 million. They will include voluntary contributions amounting to \$62 million to a selection of the more effective development agencies of the UN system such as UNDP, UNICEF, and WFP. International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have been allocated \$85 million. Commonwealth programs and a

number of specialist international non-government agencies and development and research institutions will also be supported in their development activities.

Emergencies and refugees

Australia provides assistance in cash and kind for emergencies and natural disasters in developing countries.

The channelling of the emergency aid is through a variety of agencies depending on the nature of each emergency. In 1987-88, \$40 million will be provided to allow for an Australian response to emergency, disaster and refugee situations. Assistance includes food aid, temporary housing materials and grants.

Australia also supports the general programs of a number of organisations by making contributions to their core budgets. These include the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN Relief and Works Agency. Australia also provides assistance for disaster preparedness and prevention measures.

Community and commercial programs

The Australian public has consistently demonstrated its concern about poverty in the developing world. The government provides funds to subsidise the development projects and relief activities of non-government organisations. These agencies provide development and emergency aid from funds raised directly in the community, on a much larger scale than the subsidies they receive from the government. They undertake a range of development projects, development education and volunteer programs. A total of \$11 million has been allocated to voluntary agencies in 1987-88.

The direct participation of the academic and research community in the aid program is also encouraged and \$24 million has been allocated to these activities.

In line with the stated government policy, the promotion of Australia's political-strategic and commercial interests respectively are among the primary objectives of the aid program. AIDAB promotes Australian commercial interests within this policy framework through business liaison activities.

Australia's mixed credit scheme, the Development Import Finance Facility (DIFF), provides opportunities for Australian business to supply developmentally important goods and services. Mixed credits combine grant aid funds with commercial export credits to provide 'soft finance'.

The operations of the DIFF scheme have been significantly streamlined following a review in 1986-87. Allocations to the scheme will be \$30 million in 1987-88.

Consular services and passports

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible to the Minister for the protection and welfare of Australian citizens and their interests overseas. Consular services to the Australian public are available from Australian diplomatic and consular posts throughout the world.

Australia's consular service continued to operate effectively and to cope with a greater volume of inquiries attributable to a continuing increase in Australian tourism abroad. In 1986-87, Australia's overseas posts dealt with over 125,000 requests for consular assistance, including 229 cases of Australians dying abroad and the arrest of 146 persons.

Policy developments during the past year included advanced discussions concerning consular agreements with several East European countries, and a decision to compensate Australian POWs who were illegally interned in German concentration camps during World War II.

The past year also marked the continuation of a determined effort by Australia to research and develop consular policies which will more clearly reflect Australian values, open government and Australia's commitment to the defence of its citizens' human rights.

These developments are largely in response to public expectations and recognition of the importance of an effective consular service.

Since 1 July 1984 all passport applicants have been required to lodge their applications in person. Some 80 per cent of all applications are now handled by Post Offices. The telephone information service for passport clients has been centralised so that country dwellers are treated similarly to those from the city. In 1986 almost 700,000 passports were issued.

Australian representation overseas

As at 30 June 1987, Australia maintained the following diplomatic and consular representation overseas (full details of these missions are available from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, A.C.T. 2600).

Embassies

Abu Dhabi (in Ryadh); Albania (in Yugoslavia); Algeria; American Samoa (in Western Samoa); Angola (in Zambia); Argentina; Austria; Bahrain (in Saudi Arabia); Belgium; Bolivia (in Chile); Brazil; Bulgaria (in Yugoslavia); Burma; Chile; China; Columbia (in Venezuela); Comoros (in Mauritius); Costa Rica (in Mexico); Czechoslovakia (in Poland); Denmark; Ecuador (in Venezuela); Egypt; El Salvador (in Mexico); Ethiopia; Finland (in Sweden); France; French Polynesia (in New Caledonia); Gabon (in Nigeria); German Democratic Republic (in Poland); Germany, Federal Republic of; Greece; Guatemala (in Mexico); The Holy See; Honduras (in Mexico); Hungary; Iceland (in Denmark); Indonesia; Iran; Iraq; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Ivory Coast (in Switzerland); Japan; Jordan; Korea, Republic of; Kuwait (in Saudi Arabia); Laos; Lebanon; Luxembourg (in Belgium); Madagascar (in Mauritius); Maldives, Republic of (in Sri Lanka); Mexico; Mongolia (in U.S.S.R.); Morocco (in France); Mozambique (in Zimbabwe); Nepal; Netherlands; Nicaragua (in Mexico); Norway (in Sweden); Oman (in Saudi Arabia); Pakistan; Panama (in Venezuela); Paraguay (in Argentina); Peru (in Brazil); Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Qatar (in Saudi Arabia); Romania (in Yugoslavia); Saudi Arabia; Senegal (in Switzerland); Somalia (in Kenya); South Africa; Spain; Sudan (in Egypt); Sweden; Switzerland; Syria; Thailand; Tunisia (in Algeria); Turkey; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; United Arab Emirates (in Saudi Arabia); United States of America; Uruguay (in Argentina); Venezuela; Vietnam; Wallis and Futura Island (in New Caledonia); Yemen Arab Republic (in Saudi Arabia); Yemen, Peoples Democratic Republic of (in Saudi Arabia); Yugoslavia.

High Commissions

Antigua & Barbuda (in Jamaica); Bahamas (in Jamaica); Bangladesh; Barbados (in Jamaica); Bermuda (in Canada); Botswana (in Zimbabwe); Brunei; Canada; Cyprus; Dominica (in Jamaica); Fiji; The Gambia (in Nigeria); Ghana (in Nigeria); Grenada (in Jamaica); Guyana (in Jamaica); India; Jamaica; Kenya; Kiribati; Lesotho (in South Africa); Malaysia; Malawi (in Zambia); Malta; Mauritius; Nauru; New Zealand; Nigeria; Papua New Guinea; St Lucia (in Jamaica); St. Vincent and the Grenadines (in Jamaica); Seychelles (in Mauritius); Sierra Leone (in Nigeria); Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Swaziland (in South Africa); Tanzania; Tonga; Trinidad and Tobago (in Jamaica); Tuvalu (in Fiji); Uganda (in Kenya); United Kingdom; Vanuatu; Western Samoa; Zambia; Zimbabwe.

Other

Mission to—European Communities (Brussels); United Nations (New York); United Nations (Geneva); UNESCO (Paris); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Paris); United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (Vienna); UN Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok); International Atomic Energy Agency (Vienna); Food and Agriculture Organisation (Rome); International Civil Aviation Organisation (Montreal).

Consulate-General in—Auckland; Bombay; Chicago; Frankfurt; Hong Kong; Honolulu; Houston; Jeddah; Los Angeles; Milan; New York; Noumea; Osaka; San Francisco; Shanghai; Toronto; Vancouver.

Consulate in—Bali; Edinburgh; Geneva; Manchester.

Specialist officers of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, other Australian Government departments and the Defence Services stationed abroad are attached to Australian diplomatic or consular missions. Senior attached officers are in some cases accredited to the missions with diplomatic or consular ranks approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS— A BRIEF HISTORY

(This special article has been contributed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade)

The Department of External Affairs, as it was first named, was one of seven departments of State created in 1901 to service the new Australian Federal Government in Melbourne. It was curiously titled in that the six federating colonies very explicitly had declared their aversion to independence from the British Empire centered on London. The Federation saw independence as the probable ultimate point in Australia's evolution; for the time being, they preferred the economic and military comfort to be had in a powerful empire and for them and for the Imperial Parliament which gave its legitimising blessing to the enterprise, the new colonial Federation was no more self-governing or independent than had been its component colonies, now called States. Moreover, while the colonies were happy to surrender their potential for separate evolution towards independence, they were jealous enough of their separateness to want only limited union and they carefully limited the functions granted to the new Federal Government.

One function which the colonies did grant however, was primacy in dealings with London, the Federation's only legitimate point of contact with the world outside. The early federal Prime Ministers, whether also Ministers for External Affairs or not (and most of them were), used the Department of External Affairs as their secretariat, primarily for their dealings with London through the Governor-General in Australia and the British Colonial Office. When the Prime Minister's Department was instituted in 1911, the Department of External Affairs lost its principal *raison d'être*, and in 1916 it was abolished.

After the World War I, international politics quickly centered on individual nation States rather than empires and when the League of Nations was established in a serious effort to resolve world conflict, its covenant was so framed as to allow membership to self-governing colonies like Australia.

Australia was as anxious as ever to remain part of a strong British Empire, but separate membership of the League of Nations after the War forced on her a degree of separate international political activity. For one thing, she now administered the former German colony of New Guinea under mandate, with accountability to the League. It was mainly to meet obligations associated with League membership that, in 1921, a Department of External Affairs was re-established in Melbourne (the seat of Federal Government not moving to Canberra until 1927). This, though, was a department more in name than in fact: its Minister until 1932 was the Prime Minister of the day, its permanent head was the permanent head of the Prime Minister's Department, and it enjoyed no separate budgetary allocation. In fact, it functioned as, and was known as, the External Affairs branch of the Prime Minister's Department.

During the 1920s complex and subtle changes were made to relations between the United Kingdom and the white settler societies overseas—so subtle that scarcely anyone in Australia at the time fully comprehended their significance. One outcome was that where formerly Australian federal Ministers had access to the crown through United Kingdom Ministers, now only Australian Ministers would advise the crown on Australian federal matters, and the monarch's representative, the Governor-General, no longer would be as well the agent of the United Kingdom government. This meant that Australia now could engage in separate diplomatic dealings with foreign States. However, Australia still saw herself as essentially a British State and for economic, strategic and sentimental reasons, Australian governments, always fearful of threat to Australia's long lines of communication, were in no hurry to take Australia into independent diplomacy. Australia had been pulled along unwillingly in the 1920s in the wake of Canada, the Irish Free State and South Africa which differed from Australia in history and ethnic composition and, in the case of the former two, could relax in their physical proximity to great powers which must defend them in defending themselves.

It was not until 1935, therefore, that an Australian Federal Government, reacting to an ominous international situation, created at least the potential for an Australian foreign office.

The Department of External Affairs in 1935 was separated from the Prime Minister's Department and given its own permanent head (Colonel W. R. Hodgson, whose background was in military intelligence) and its own budgetary allocation. It was a tiny department of half a dozen officers with little experience in international diplomacy. The Department began at once to recruit university graduates but, when it was decided in 1939 that Australia should proceed to open diplomatic posts overseas, the Department could not yet provide officers to head those posts. The first Minister to the United States in 1940 was R. G. Casey, formerly Minister for Supply, though in the 1920s an officer of the Department; the first Minister to Japan in the same year was Sir John Latham, Chief Justice of the High Court, though in 1932-34 Minister for External Affairs; the first High Commissioner to Canada, also in 1940, was Sir William Glasgow, a former soldier and politician; the first Minister to China in 1941 was Sir Federic Eggleston, a former Victorian politician. It was not until 1945 that career officers from the Department were thought ready to serve as heads of mission.

A feeling that Australia had suffered for lack of her own sources of information in the late 1930s, fear of physical vulnerability during World War II, the post-war emergence of nation states in Asia under indigenous governments and renewed emphasis on international organisation for the peaceful resolution of conflict all impelled Australia in the 1940s and early 1950s to rapidly expand the Department of External Affairs. Well into the 1950s the Department still had to look outside its own ranks for heads of mission. Some posts were held to be of such crucial significance as to need the appointment of former Cabinet Ministers able to speak for Australia with special knowledge and authority, and it was not until 1964 that a career diplomat was made ambassador in Washington (J. K. Waller) and even later (1980) before another man went to London as High Commissioner (Sir James Plimsoll). A High Commission in London, it might be noted, had been opened back in 1910 but for many years the High Commissioner was seen as little more than manager of Australia House, home to public servants working in London. Even after changes in imperial relations in the 1920s, High Commissioners in British countries were taken to represent government rather than heads of state—a distinction which survives to this day. In fact, because as a colonial Federation Australia at first limited its external dealings to London through the Prime Minister, the High Commission in London was administered by the Prime Minister's Department until 1972.

Australia has never had an elite diplomatic service separated from the rest of the federal public service but the Department has always handled its own recruitment and, apart from a few years in the 1940s when non-graduates were accepted, it has chosen graduates according to demanding criteria. By 1950 the selection policies were paying dividends and the Department and its diplomatic service seemed to have talent to spare; its officers on a number of occasions being appointed to senior positions in other departments. It was at this time also that the first experienced diplomat was appointed as the Department's permanent head and at last a truly professional foreign service had emerged in Australia.

Although the days of the Department's constant expansion are largely past, its activities remain substantial. Since the 1940s, and irrespective of parties in power, it has been accepted in Canberra that Australia's survival and prosperity cannot be assured by military power or even solely by alliance diplomacy and that Australia's best strategy for survival lies in adopting an active and constructive international profile. This led Australia from the first to take a very active role at the United Nations and in the various organisations operating under its umbrella. It has also led Australia to react positively to the emergence of a host of states in the wake of the great decolonisation process which has been in train since the 1940s. Whereas at its birth in 1935 the Department serviced no missions overseas, it now handles relations with close to 150 countries from more than 90 overseas missions.

Today the Department has a staff of 1,770 officers in Canberra and 800 overseas, with a further 2,000 locally recruited staff overseas. Large and sophisticated communications systems and computerisation help cope with the need for frequent and immediate decision making from Canberra to all parts of the world. Some things have inevitably been lost. When the Department, like Canberra itself, was young and small, officers were known to take their dogs to work with them and one officer even rode a horse to work. There was a camaraderie which could not survive the great expansion.