

Delegation for Relations with
Australia and New Zealand
- The Chairman -

Mr Elmar BROK
Chairman of the Committee on Foreign
Affairs, Security and Defence Policy
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz
B-1047 BRUSSELS

Subject: 27th interparliamentary meeting between the European Parliament and Australia
in Strasbourg, 20-22 April 2004

Dear Mr Chairman

Please find enclosed the report on the 27th EP-Australia interparliamentary meeting held in
Strasbourg on 20-22 April 2004.

I shall be happy to provide you with any further information you may require.

Yours sincerely

Robert Sturdy

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

**27th EP-Australia Interparliamentary Meeting,
20-22 April 2004**

Strasbourg

Report by Mr Robert Sturdy, Chairman of the Delegation

INTRODUCTION

The Delegation for Relations with Australia and New Zealand held the 27th EP/Australia Interparliamentary meeting, from 20-22 April 2004 in Strasbourg, with a parliamentary delegation from Australia composed of Members of the Senate and of the House of Representatives and led by Senator John Tierney. The programme of the Interparliamentary Meeting, the agenda of the meetings and the lists of participants are annexed to this report. In addition to the Interparliamentary meeting itself, the Australian Members of Parliament had the opportunity to meet with other MEPs in their capacity as chairmen of parliamentary committees or representatives of their respective political groups.

The working sessions were co-chaired by Mr Robert Sturdy, MEP and Senator John Tierney.

I. Working session (21 April, 15-30-18.00)

The members of the European Parliament's delegation discussed the main political and economic events which have occurred in the European Union and Australia since the last interparliamentary meeting held in September 2002 in Strasbourg.. The discussion then focussed on the following agenda items:

1 Energy and emissions, the environment

The **European Delegation** explained that the European Union is very much concerned about the security of its energy supplies; a draft directive has been adopted by the Commission, but the EP will have to deal with it after the elections. There is unanimity on the objective of sharply increasing the use of renewable energy, but nuclear energy is still being envisaged in diverging manners in the various Member States and by the various political forces

While nuclear energy accounts for 34% of energy sources, the share is of 25% % for gas and coal, 30% for oil and about 10% for renewables. The objective is to bring this share to 22.33%. Furthermore, 10% of the capacity should be available for cross-border trading. Energy production has to deal with obvious security concerns, in particular with protection against terrorism, but also with possible disruptions in imports of fuels: ultimately the best defense against insecurity is diversity of supply. As North Sea gas supplies will decrease, the importance of Russia as a supplier will be highlighted, but internal demand in Russia, as well as demand from other Countries , will also rise significantly.

There is some awareness of the need to develop efficient energy use (e.g. for the heating of buildings), but a change of habits by the public, in particular with regard to transports, is required. Important research projects are being funded (JET, ITER) and the property structure of production units has been reorganized, following widespread liberalization, with emphasis on competitive performance.

On wider environment issues, it is necessary to stress also the role of the European Parliament in areas such as consumer protection, food safety, ecodesign, as well as energy savings. Different approaches were being discussed in those areas, and often the main divides would not be classical left/right divides.

Typical examples are discussions on the future of nuclear energy, the role of public services, food and animal feed regulations.

It could be said that Europe has finally discovered environmental issues, and "environment responsibility" has been widely recognized; the "precautionary principle" means also a reversal of the burden of proof in this area.. While it is clear that the price structure is affected by hidden subsidies and externalization of costs by industries, price capping further distorts the picture.

A discussion on the future of the Kyoto protocol took place.. The **Australian Delegation** explained that the present Government is against ratification, but, if successful at the next elections, a Labour Administration would proceed to ratify. The European Parliament stressed that emissions trading would be a crucial problem in the future; the idea that "Kyoto is dead" has been voiced, but it is not possible to write off Kyoto completely .

On Agriculture, the **European Delegation** recognized the negative impact of the CAP, in particular with regard to developing countries. However, the main problem is a problem of access, and it is both in the interest of the EU and in the interest of Developing Countries to regulate in a balanced way access to the EU's markets.

The emphasis put by the CAP on production has also destabilised our structures and our markets, and agricultural prices have become a means of redistributing revenue among economic operators, but also among Member States.

The emphasis had now to shift on quality, but Developing Countries had problems in adopting high standards for Hygiene legislation, quality of drinking water, limit values for pesticides. The EU should help its Developing partners in tackling these issues.

With regard to reports circulated in the EU on logging of old growth forest in Tasmania, the **Australian Delegation** stressed that logging is in the area of competence of the States, but that a recent Federal/States agreement (the "Regional forest agreement") has sought to strike the proper balance in the management of this resource. The objective is to create a sustainable industry: in the case of Tasmania, 65-70% of its forests are reserved and can not be logged. On admissibility of "old growth logging", there is a hot dispute between representatives of industry and labour on one side and environmentalists on the other: Tasmania does rely on local supply for its important furniture industry..

2 Human rights and rights of Aboriginal people

The **European Delegation** enquired on the situation of Aboriginal people in Australia; at the same time, it stressed that human rights within the EU itself are the subject of numerous discussions and parliamentary reports. and have to be closely monitored.

The **Australian Delegation** openly admitted that progress in this area is "extremely slow", giving rise to an "entrenched problem". Australia's treatment of Aboriginal people is a "blot on history". Various approaches implemented in the past to help them have not worked, and life expectancy now for the Aboriginal community (at 5 years) is the worst in the world. The trauma of the separation of children from their parents, and the consequent disruption of communities, are still unresolved.

More recently, a culture of paternalism produced reliance on welfare, and financial means have not been used effectively in order to develop self-sufficiency.

3 Other issues

A brief discussion took place on multilateral vs. bilateral approaches to trade issues, in particular with regard to relaunching the Doha Round and the recent Australia/US Free trade agreement.

II. Meetings with representatives of committees and political groups **(20 April 16.30-19.30; 21 April, 10.00- 13.00; 22 April, 9.30-11.00),**

The Australian Delegation met with

Mr Graham Watson MEP, President of the ELDR

Mr James Elles MEP, Vice-President of the EPP-ED

Ms Eryl Mc Nally MEP, PSE coordinator for the Committee on Industry, Trade, Research and Energy

Mr Neil Parish MEP, committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Richard Corbett MEP, Committee on Constitutional Affairs

Ms Eluned Morgan MEP, Committee on Budgetary Control

Issues discussed included the enlargement, EU constitutional reform, European elections, CAP reform, the environment, parliamentary accountability, political and economic developments in the EU, political groups and political parties in the EU.

The Delegation of Australia took part in the meeting of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development on 20 April, 18.00-19.30.

III. CONCLUSIONS

This interparliamentary meeting provided the opportunity for wide-ranging exchanges of views with Australian Members of Parliament. It contributed to a better understanding of the complexity of the European Union's organisation; it also highlighted the important role played by the European Parliament in determining and developing various policies which have a direct effect on relations between the European Union and Australia.

Finally, this visit demonstrated the value that MPs from Australia attach to close and regular contacts with the EP. In view of the decision by the EP Conference of Presidents of 17 December 2003 not to authorize the 27th IPM to take place in Australia in February 2004, it is significant that the Australian side decided, at very short notice, to hold the meeting in the EU before the European elections, so that the regular dialogue would not suffer a long interruption.

It is important therefore that the new European Parliament and the new Delegation reciprocate this interest and visit Australia as soon as feasible.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

27th EP/Australia Interparliamentary Meeting STRASBOURG

21-22 April 2004

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Security issues, cooperation in fight against terrorism
2. WTO, agriculture and other trade issues
3. Environment and sustainable development (including energy and emissions)
4. Immigrant integration, minority issues and human rights
5. Developments in the EU and in Australia

24 March2004

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

The 27th EP/Australia Interparliamentary Meeting

DRAFT PROGRAMME

19-22 April 2004

Strasbourg

Monday 19 April

12h15 Arrival of Australian Delegation from Paris (flight AF 7768)

19h50 Arrival of Australian Delegation from Paris (flight AF 7766)

Transfer to

Hotel Régent Petite France

Tuesday 20 April

free time

12h30 *briefing with Ambassador at hotel*

14h10 depart hotel for

14h30 Court of Human Rights

15h45 proceed to EP on foot

16h00 arrive LOW entrance

16h30 Meeting with Mr Graham Watson, Chairman of the ELDR group

Venue: LOW S 4.2

17h15 Meeting with Mr Neil Parish, Member of the Agriculture Committee

Venue: LOW S 4.2

17h30 attendance at Committee meeting

(Agriculture committee - WIC 200)

18h10 depart from WIC entrance - bus to hotel

19h15 depart for the Wantzenau

20h00 Dinner offered by Mr Robert Sturdy, Chairman of the Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand

Venue: Relais de la Poste

Wednesday 21 April

09h45 Depart hotel

meeting room LOW S4.2

10h00 Mr Richard CORBETT MEP (Convention)

11h00 Ms Eluned MORGAN MEP (Parliamentary Accountability)

12h00 Mr Dermot SCOTT, Head of European Parliament Office in the United Kingdom
(preparation for European elections)

- 13h00 Lunch hosted by Delegation for Relations with Australia
Venue : Restaurant ZuemYsehuet
- 14h30 Depart restaurant
- 15h00 Working Session of the 27th EP/Australia Interparliamentary Meeting
Room: SDM 5
- 18h30 Return to hotel
- 19h40 Leave hotel by foot
- 20h00 Dinner hosted by Mr Gérard Onesta, Vice-President of the European Parliament, in honour of the Australian Delegation
Venue: Kammerzell Restaurant
- 23h00 Return to hotel on foot

Thursday 22 April

- 09h00 Leave hotel
- 09h30 Meetings with political groups and Committee Chairs
Room: SDM 5
- 09.30 Representatives of the PPE-DE Group
Mr. Elles, Vice-President of the PPE-DE group
- 10.15 Representatives of the PSE Group
Ms Eryl McNally, PSE group
- 11.00 Attendance at a plenary sitting of the European Parliament (Official Visitors' Gallery)
Welcome of the delegation by the President

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

The 27th EP/Australia Interparliamentary Meeting

List of Members of the EP Delegation (15)

Mr STURDY Robert, Chairman	PPE-DE
Ms ROTH-BEHRENDT Dagmar, 1 st Vice-Chair	PSE
Mr CHICHESTER Giles Bryan	PPE-DE
Mr CORNILLET Thierry	PPE-DE
Mr ONESTA Gérard	Verts/ALE
Mr WYNN Terence	PSE

Other EP Members (1)

Mr CORBETT Richard, PSE
Mr ELLES James, PPE-DE
Ms McNALLY Eryl, PSE
Ms MORGAN Eluned, PSE
Mr PARISH Neil, PPE-DE
Mr WATSON Graham, ELDR

PPE-DE Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats
PSE Group of the Party of European Socialists
ELDR Group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party
Verts/ALE Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
GUE/NGL Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left
UEN Union for Europe of the Nations Group
EDD Group for a Europe of Democracies and Diversities
NI Non-attached

25 March 2004

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand

27th EP/Australia Interparliamentary Meeting

19-22 April 2004
Strasbourg

List of delegation from Australia

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Senator John Tierney ,
Leader of the Delegation | Senator for New South Wales
Liberal Party of Australia |
| 2 | Hon Arch Bevis MP ,
Deputy Leader of the Delegation | Member for Brisbane (Qld)
Australian Labour Party |
| 3 | Senator George Campbell | Senator for New South Wales
Australian Labor Party |
| 4 | Senator Andrew Murray | Senator for Western Australia
Australian Democrats |
| 5 | Senator Ross Lightfoot | Senator for Western Australia
Liberal Party of Australia |
| | Ms Helen Donaldson | Delegation Secretary |