

POLICY BRIEF

LOWY INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

OCTOBER 2007

HUGH WHITE
Visiting Fellow
Lowy Institute for International
Policy

and

Professor of Strategic Studies
Australian National University

Tel: +61 2 6125 1562
hwhite@lowyinstitute.org



LOWY INSTITUTE FOR
INTERNATIONAL POLICY
31 Bligh Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Tel: +61 2 8238 9000
Fax: +612 8238 9005
www.lowyinstitute.org

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

As more and more Australians travel and live overseas, the Australian Government finds itself under increasing pressure to provide consular help and support, especially in emergencies. Providing these consular services is a traditional role for government representatives abroad, but both the scale and the nature of the demand have grown significantly in recent years. The demand from Australians for evacuation from South Lebanon during the conflict there last year demonstrated how far community expectations of the nature and scale of consular help have increased. This raises two problems. First, there is an issue of expectation management; community expectations are starting to run ahead of what can practicably be provided. Second, there is a problem of resources and priorities. While the consular workload has grown, the resources of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have not, and the result has inevitably been a diversion of resources away from other diplomatic tasks. That is something Australia can ill afford.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

First, the Government needs to take steps to cap community expectations of the kinds of help it can provide to Australians overseas, and send clearer messages about the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own security and well-being while traveling or living abroad. Second, the Government needs to ensure that the resources devoted to consular work do not detract from the ability of Australia's foreign service to undertake critical diplomatic work. If DFAT is to promote our major national interests as well as look after Australians in trouble abroad, it needs more money.

The Lowy Institute for International Policy is an independent international policy think tank based in Sydney, Australia. Its mandate ranges across all the dimensions of international policy debate in Australia — economic, political and strategic — and it is not limited to a particular geographic region. Its two core tasks are to:

- produce distinctive research and fresh policy options for Australia's international policy and to contribute to the wider international debate.
- promote discussion of Australia's role in the world by providing an accessible and high quality forum for discussion of Australian international relations through debates, seminars, lectures, dialogues and conferences.

Lowy Institute Policy Briefs are designed to address a particular, current policy issue and to suggest solutions. They are deliberately prescriptive, specifically addressing two questions: What is the problem? What should be done?

The views expressed in this paper are entirely the author's own and not those of the Lowy Institute for International Policy.

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

The biggest worry

Recently one of Australia's most senior foreign policy officials was asked by a foreign counterpart what issues kept him awake at night – Iraq, East Timor, Indonesia, the rise of China, global warming? The answer was none of these, but rather 'Looking after Australians overseas'. Somewhat ruefully he explained that the pressure of events allowed him and his department little time to think about the big international questions confronting Australia in the new century. The single issue that made the biggest demands on his staff, that posed the biggest risk of embarrassment to the Government, and on which public and ministerial expectations of his department were hardest to meet, was providing protection and assistance to individual Australians abroad. His interlocutor nodded in energetic agreement. 'So it is with us, also', he replied.

Welcome to the new world of diplomacy, in which what is called consular work has moved from the margins to near the centre of the priorities of Australia's foreign affairs department in Canberra and our missions overseas. It is one of the stranger characteristics of foreign policy in the 21st century that at a time when globalisation is thought by many to be making the nation-state less and less important, as global citizens seem increasingly

to cut themselves loose from national roots to lead cosmopolitan lives, governments around the world – especially governments of advanced countries like Australia – seem to face ever-rising expectations from citizens that they will accept greater and greater responsibility for the safety of their citizens overseas. So while citizenship for the individual seems to mean less and less, the responsibilities expected of (and accepted by) the state to protect citizens abroad seem to grow.

In Australia, this trend has been marked in recent years by a series of high-profile cases and crises: the evacuation of Australians from Southern Lebanon during the Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006, the search for and recovery of Douglas Wood, taken hostage in Iraq in April 2005; the assistance provided to victims of the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004, and the rescue of Australians wounded and killed after the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002 and 1 October 2005.

These were massive operations involving dozens of officials for weeks at a time.¹ But the consular workload goes on between crises as well.² The work is done well. Many can speak from personal experience that the consular support and assistance provided by DFAT is first class. But western governments live in fear that an inadequate response will generate harsh voter backlash. For example, after the

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

Tsunami, the Swedish Government was viewed as being confused and apathetic in its reaction to the plight of Swedish holidaymakers affected by the disaster.³ In January 2005 Sweden convened a Catastrophe Commission to investigate the Government's response⁴ and its 2006 report caused a number of government officials to resign.⁵ Following further allegations, the Commission was reconvened and is expected to report its findings shortly.⁶

The Australian Government was also criticised for not doing enough to assist Australians during the war in Southern Lebanon last year. On 15 July 2006 families of the some 2,000 Australian tourists and 20,000-plus Australian Lebanese caught up in the conflict castigated DFAT over its advice to their relatives to stay put and register their presence with the Australian Embassy in Beirut.⁷ The sense of frustration felt by those Australians in Lebanon and their relatives back home was further exacerbated by the double-booking of a Turkish rescue ship four days later.⁸

And serious questions remain. What are the limits to the responsibility of the Australian Government – and the burdens that should be borne by Australian taxpayers – to help Australians overseas? Who counts as an Australian, and under what circumstances should Australia accept responsibility? How far should Australia compromise wider national

interests to support or assist individuals in trouble? What responsibility do individuals bear for their own safety overseas, and does government risk creating a moral hazard by offering help to those who are too feckless to look after themselves? Finally, what is the cost of the consular revolution to a foreign affairs bureaucracy which is already overstretched? What are the implications for the conduct of Australian foreign policy and the protection and promotion of truly national interests? This matters, because in the real world of day-to-day diplomacy, consular work pushes out other, arguably more important, priorities. The burden of consular work falls overwhelmingly on Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The number of diplomatic and consular officials deployed overseas fell from 618 in 1996 to 508 in 2006.⁹ Increasingly, the effort of this shrinking number of officers has been devoted to consular work, which means that less and less time is given to other things. DFAT's senior leaders and its minister have taken pride in running a tight ship. But running a tight ship means setting priorities that really match the national interests. Are we doing too much consular work?

Back to basics

The basic idea of statehood suggests a very limited role for governments in protecting their

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

citizens overseas. The state's primary responsibility is to protect its citizens – and others – while they are in its sovereign territory. This is the area in which the state has the monopoly of legitimate force. Leave the state's sovereign territory, and the state has neither the means nor the responsibility to protect you. Of course it has never been that simple. For a start, powerful hegemonic states have historically often claimed rights to protect their citizens beyond their own borders. The plaintive cry of 'You can't touch me, I'm an American citizen' is an echo of a much older principle of Roman law and diplomacy, in which Rome claimed for its citizens immunity from local authorities, and they could only be tried in Roman courts. The principle was invoked by the great British statesman, Lord Palmerston, who as Foreign Secretary in 1850 provoked a major diplomatic crisis in Europe by sending British gunboats to blockade Athens in support of claims by a British subject against the Greek Government:

“...the Roman, in days of old, held himself free from indignity when he could say *Civis Romanus Sum* (I am a Roman Citizen); so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong”.¹⁰

Palmerston's broad interpretation of Britain's rights and obligations to its subjects abroad was not based on any rigorous analysis of international law or national interest, but on domestic politics. His policy was deprecated by foreign policy elites as impractical and provocative, but it was popular with the voters, and sustainable in the late colonial era in which powerful European states claimed powers and privileges over non-European governments and peoples which can hardly be supported today. Nor was the US immune: in 1904, American politics was convulsed by the abduction of a presumed American citizen, one Mr Perdicaris, in Morocco by rebellious tribesmen. Morocco was then a pawn in the highly strategic manoeuvrings between the major powers that led to the First World War, but Washington made the safety of Perdicaris the hinge of its entire policy there, and sent battleships to enforce its views. This robust policy was wildly popular at home, and swung the Republican nomination for Roosevelt; only later did it come out that Perdicaris was not really an American citizen at all.¹¹

However, for all their muscular displays, late imperial-era statesmen like Roosevelt and Palmerston were too shrewd to take their own rhetoric seriously, and in fact often failed to support their subjects in trouble abroad. Indeed they took what was, by today's standards, a fairly limited view of the responsibilities of

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

governments to their citizens overseas. The classic account of a state's consular duties and responsibilities to its citizens overseas is set out in the diplomat's bible, *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*.¹² Satow distinguishes consular from diplomatic work on the basis that diplomacy involves the relations between states, while consular work relates primarily to the protection of individuals of one state living in or visiting territory of another. 'Protection may involve assisting or repatriating the destitute, settling disputes and administrative matters arising on visiting ships, visiting nationals in hospital if they are injured or become ill on holiday, helping them with their arrangements, and tracing the relatives of victims of an air disaster.' That list still rings true today, but the scale has changed out of all recognition.

Why has demand for consular services grown?

Several factors explain why the burden of consular services has grown in recent years. First, of course, there is the simple growth in the numbers of Australians traveling and living overseas. This is not a new trend; as Satow said, 'The growth in tourism and in casual travel by the impecunious has led to a considerable increase in this kind of consular

work'.¹³ But the rate of increase has accelerated sharply. Since 1997 the number of Australians traveling overseas each year has exceeded 3 million, and this figure has continued to grow by between 5-8 percent per annum, whilst the numbers leaving to live overseas has also increased.¹⁴ Almost 900,000 Australians live overseas¹⁵ and over 40,000 Australians leave each year to live, work or study abroad.¹⁶ With larger numbers traveling and living abroad, the number who can or will get themselves into trouble at any time increases too. Moreover, the kind of people traveling is changing too, both as travel becomes cheaper, and as a result of social change. For example, there is strong anecdotal evidence that as Australians suffering from mental illness are increasingly integrated into the community, larger numbers of such people are traveling overseas. When, as often happens, the stresses of travel or lack of medication exacerbates mental conditions, Australian consular staff are called upon to help. Factors such as these mean that, while the basic number of travelers is growing fast, the numbers of travelers less able to look after themselves is growing faster still.

Second, the Government has encouraged Australians to look to it for help if they find themselves in trouble overseas, especially since the election of the Howard Government. As Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer was from the outset especially energetic in driving his

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

department to do more to help Australians overseas. This had at least in part a political motive. In Opposition, Downer had criticised his predecessor, Gareth Evans, for paying too little attention to the interests and welfare of ‘ordinary Australians’, and spending too much time on high-flown diplomatic initiatives. It is an easy charge to lay, and has a certain superficial appeal to an electorate always willing to think that diplomats do little but draft memos and drink cocktails. But once in office Downer was conscientious in elevating the protection of Australians overseas in his department’s ordering of priorities, and he has made a point of this in frequent public comments over the eleven years the Government has been in office.

Third, and partly as a result of government encouragement, the public’s expectations have grown. As the Government has undertaken more and more high-cost, highly-publicised consular activities like the Tsunami relief operation in Asia and securing Douglas Wood’s release from Iraq, Australians have come to expect the same levels of support if they find themselves in trouble, and the Government finds itself trapped in a cycle of rising expectations. Having encouraged the public to expect help from the Government if they are in trouble overseas, the Government now finds itself surprised and alarmed at the levels of support that Australians now believe they have

a right to expect. In financial year 1996–97, DFAT provided some 13,000 Australians with consular assistance.¹⁷ Just seven years later, in 2004, this number had almost doubled in overseas assistance alone. That year, DFAT helped over 25,000 Australians in difficulty in over 152 countries¹⁸ Two years later, the number of countries in which assistance was required had jumped to 178.¹⁹ After encouraging Australians to rely on the Government, it set a deadline of 25 July 2006 for the final evacuation date from Lebanon, and Downer stated that time was indeed running out: ‘Obviously, we’re not running a transport service in general, we’re running an emergency relief operation’.²⁰

What are the problems?

Clearly there is a risk that public expectations of help to those in trouble overseas will exceed what it is possible or sensible for the Government to provide. It can be argued that we are already well past that point. This paper therefore proposes that the Government should set, publicise, explain and observe clear limits to consular assistance, and ensure that the foreign service and other elements of government are properly resourced to undertake the work encompassed by those limits without detriment to the key priorities of

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

foreign policy. To explore where those limits might reasonably be set, we might start by exploring in more detail the problems that arise when governments try too hard to protect their citizens overseas. There are problems of practicality, principle and priority.

Practicality

First, we need to consider the practical limits to the services and support that governments can provide. We might start with the question of travel advice. DFAT provides advice to Australians about where it is safe to travel at its ‘must see destination’, the *Smartraveller* website.²¹ The website sensibly stresses travellers’ own responsibilities to ensure their own safety. But the actual advice provided about where it is safe to travel is often of limited value. The nature of the risks to which travelers can be subject, and the impossibility of predicting them, mean that the Government is often simply not in a position to provide clear advice about whether a given travel destination will be safe or not. Inevitably the main concern in formulating advice is to ensure that DFAT is not caught out under-estimating the risks of travel. Advice is, as a result, often rather meaninglessly cautious. It must also often be incomplete.

Sometimes, however, the Government may have conflicting motives and imperatives in

setting travel advice. In the months before the first Bali bombing in October 2002, for example, the Government found itself in a difficult position in formulating travel advice about Bali. The growth of Jemaah Islamiyah made it evident that there was a clear threat of terrorist attacks targeted specifically at Westerners and even Australians, and that as a result places where Westerners congregated posed a specific risk. Nonetheless, while Indonesia as a whole was rated a high security risk to Australian travelers, Bali was not. At least for some of those involved in these decisions, this was in part because of concern for the impact on Australian tourism to Bali, which would have consequences for Australian-Indonesian relations. This was a legitimate concern at the time, when we were seeking Indonesian cooperation on important issues, including terrorism. It is simply unrealistic to expect the Government to make such decisions in a diplomatic vacuum.²²

There can also be a level of uncertainty about the kind of information being sought and provided by DFAT. Many people contacting DFAT for advice about travel to places like Bali or Fiji at times of unrest simply want to ask whether tourism services are operating normally there. They may take an affirmative answer as confirmation that it is safe to travel there, but that is a different question.

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

This raises doubts about whether it is sensible for DFAT to provide information on questions which might better be directed at the travel industry. No one could argue that the Government should not provide travel advice to citizens, but there remains an unresolved tension between Canberra's evident enthusiasm to promote vigorously its ability to provide definitive travel advice, on the one hand, and its emphasis on individual responsibility on the other. The Government is at risk of promising more than it can deliver in travel advice, and in the process of raising travelers' expectations and, notwithstanding the exhortations to the contrary, encouraging travelers to think they can rely on the Government for their safety overseas. The Government might do better to tell travelers that it is their responsibility to make up their own minds about the security situations in countries they plan to visit.

Second, if things do go wrong, there are real limits to the Government's ability to rescue people. Those limits are set by distance, by scale and by situation. Last year the Government was criticised – at least at first – for being unable to organise swiftly evacuation of Australian citizens from the war zone in South Lebanon. But in reality, what more could have been done, and what more would it have been reasonable to do? South Lebanon is a long way from Australia, and well outside our area of direct strategic interest. The situation on the

ground was complex and dangerous. Without a sustained presence in the region, Australia had no choice but to rely on allies and on commercial arrangements which were always going to be difficult to organise in such a crisis. In fact, the Australian Government did very well to evacuate as many Australians as quickly as they did – and public opinion did come round to accepting the difficulties the Government was facing. The risk remains, however, that the Herculean effort to evacuate Australians will only encourage people living in Lebanon or other potentially risky places to rely even more heavily on Canberra in future, and do less to ensure their own safety.

Even closer to home, the sheer scale of some crises will put real limits on the Government's ability to help Australians in trouble. In Papua New Guinea, for example, a widespread breakdown of law and order would place immense strains on Australia's ability to evacuate the some 7,000 Australians resident in PNG.²³ The risk is that Australians in places like PNG, seeing the extraordinary efforts made to rescue Australians from Lebanon, will assume that as much or more would be done for them in a crisis. They should not bet on it. A simple airlift from Port Moresby airport would be easy to manage, but the much more complex and demanding task of collecting Australians from their homes and ferrying them to the airport in a situation of civil disorder

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

would require a major military operation that would quickly overwhelm the resources Australia can deploy even in its own backyard. And as for Indonesia: Australia has no capacity to extract Australians from Jakarta in a civil or military crisis without the active support of TNI. Whether that assistance were forthcoming would depend on the situation.

Indeed in any crisis the help that Australia can practically provide depends very much on the situation. Hurricane *Katrina* in the United States in 2005 provided an excellent example. In the territory of our close ally, the United States, Australian officials found themselves powerless to rescue Australians stranded and suffering in the disaster zone.²⁴ The Government was criticised for this: the Opposition even suggested that Australian military personnel in the United States should have had helicopters at their disposal to evacuate the Australians.²⁵ Fortunately this advice was not taken. Australian officials operating in another country and subject to that country's laws and policies do not have a free hand. They can only do what the host country is willing to let them do, and what the resources available to them allow them to do.²⁶

Sometimes it can seem tempting to kick over these limitations. In July 1994 three young Western travelers, including a 29-year old Australian, David Wilson, were abducted by a

Khmer Rouge-affiliated gang in Cambodia. All three were killed six weeks later.²⁷ The Australian Government put great pressure on the Cambodian authorities to find and rescue Wilson, and at one stage the option was explored of mounting a military operation to rescue him. Such an operation would have been undertaken without prior notification of the government in Phnom Penh, and would have been a clear breach of international law, carrying significant costs to Australia in the region. It would also have risked the lives of the Australian Defence Force personnel involved. In the event, the idea was abandoned mainly because Canberra did not know where Wilson was being held. David Wilson's death was tragic, but it might well have been a grave mistake to launch a military operation into the territory of a regional neighbour to rescue an individual citizen, no matter how tragic his individual situation might have been.

Moreover the pursuit of consular cases can conflict with other high-priority diplomatic objectives. A few years ago, instructions from Canberra required our diplomats in China to raise a particular high-profile consular case whenever they met senior Chinese government figures. This went on for several years, over a period in which many critical Australian interests were under discussion with China. Such directives may have their merits, but they come at real cost to wider national interests. It

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

is important that the balance of interests and responsibilities in such cases be judged realistically.

Principle

The expansion of consular services raises some important issues of policy principle as well as practical problems. Whenever the Government undertakes to protect us from a risk, it creates what economists call a moral hazard: we take less care ourselves to avoid risks if we expect others to look after us. This is clearly a real possibility when the Government encourages us to think that if we get into difficulties overseas they will help us out of it. The Government has clearly become more aware of this risk recently: in a speech to launch DFAT's new travel advice website, Smartraveller, Mr Downer emphasised travelers' responsibilities to take their own precautions over things like travel insurance.²⁸ But its own actions can undercut this prudent message. If travelers are confident that the Government will come to the rescue, they will be more willing to go to risky places, and more likely to stay in places as the risks of trouble mount. When a crisis looms overseas it is common for the Government to warn Australians to leave the trouble-spot by normal commercial means while they still can. The more they expect that, if things really deteriorate, the Government will send in the ADF to rescue them, the more they will be

tempted to ignore such warnings, and wait for the Government to fly them out – often free of charge – rather than pay to get themselves to safety.

It is a little inconsistent that the current Australian Government, which places rhetorical emphasis on self-reliance and deprecates the intrusion of the 'nanny state' into the realm of personal responsibility, should have presided over this significant transfer of risk and responsibility from individuals to the state, especially in an area in which the state is often so poorly placed to accept it. The New Zealand Government, for example, is much more explicit in stressing to its citizens the limits to the support that Wellington can provide them overseas.

Priorities

Finally, there is the question of priorities. Satow points out that until relatively recently these two functions were generally undertaken by quite separate groups of people. It was only after the Second World War that many governments merged their consular and diplomatic services into a single foreign service.²⁹ Today, in many posts, consular responsibilities make up a large proportion of the total workload, and often take precedence over other roles. We therefore cannot fully assess the impact of the consular revolution

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

without seeing how it affects the other work that the Government, and especially its foreign service, is supposed to do. In theory, of course, the Government could have given DFAT and other agencies more money and people to cover the increased work involved in helping Australians overseas. In practice, it has not done so. There has been instead a major movement of resources away from traditional diplomatic activity and public diplomacy, towards consular services. According to the Budget Papers, between 2001-02 and 2007-08 DFAT's budget increased by only 1.23% in real terms. Over that period, spending on traditional diplomacy fell by over 4% in real terms, and for public diplomacy by almost 28%, while spending on consular services increased by over 30%.³⁰

The result is simple, predictable and potentially very serious for Australia. Consular work and other short-term tasks have pushed aside the more important long-term responsibilities of our representatives abroad. The number of diplomats, and the proportion of their time, devoted to reporting, analysing and influencing developments in key countries central to Australia's future have fallen sharply in recent years. In countries where Australia has major and direct interests to protect and promote, the consequences can be serious and long-lasting. Indonesia is a perfect example. Major consular issues in the last few years – from the Bali

bombings to Schapelle Corby – have placed a huge workload on our mission in Jakarta. But at the same time, Indonesia's political system has been transformed by the introduction and evolution of democracy and decentralisation, and our bilateral relationship has been put under sustained strain by the backwash from East Timor. The Embassy's small political staff is overstretched even without the periodic spikes of consular work which can absorb 75% of their effort. Inevitably the long-term work on Indonesian political issues suffers. If sometime in the next few years we are taken by surprise by some major upheaval in Jakarta, people will ask what our diplomats were doing when they should have been keeping on top of developments. The answer may be that they were doing consular work.

Setting some guidelines and limits

No one would argue that governments should not help Australians in trouble abroad. But equally it is plain that we need to set some limits to the help that is promised and offered. The best way to do that would be for the Government to spell out in plain and simple terms what it is and is not prepared to do to help Australians overseas. Here are a few suggestions about what might be said.

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

- First, the Government should ensure that DFAT is properly funded to do its core work in promoting Australia's long-term international interests, as well as to attend to unavoidable consular responsibilities.
- Second, Government should clarify its message that the safety of Australians abroad is the primary responsibility of the individuals concerned, and of the governments of the countries they are visiting. Canberra should be forthright in making clear that there can be no automatic expectation that the Australian Government will rescue citizens in trouble overseas. Australians abroad should take their own measures to ensure their own safety.
- Third, the Government should be more careful not to encourage travelers to rely on DFAT's travel advice as the sole basis for decisions about where they travel. Travelers should be urged to take responsibility for their own safety, make their own enquiries and reach their own conclusions.
- Fourth, the Government should explain to countries receiving large numbers of Australian visitors that they should improve their capacities to take care of visitors if they wish to protect their tourism industry.
- Fifth, the Government should declare that it would not contemplate military action without approval of host governments to rescue individuals in trouble where no wider national policy issues were engaged.
- Sixth, the Government should adopt the practice of issuing clear instructions for Australians to leave countries or regions where danger threatens, and refuse to assist those who choose to ignore that instruction.
- Finally, the Government should clarify in advance what kinds of assistance will be provided to Australians in crisis hot-spots overseas, so that travelers and expatriates can make properly informed decisions about managing the risks they face.

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

NOTES

¹ For an excellent account of the mechanics of a major consular crisis, see Gyngell and Wesley, *Making Australian foreign policy*, Cambridge U.P. 2003 pp 161-170. The military perspective is described by Col. Andrew Condon in Operation RAMP: the evacuation from Lebanon. *Australian Army Journal* Vol IV, No 1 Autumn 2007 pp 65-75. My thanks to Mark O'Neill for drawing this account to my attention.

² To view a list of activities undertaken in an average year, see Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Annual Report 2005–06*, Key Achievements, Section 1: Overviews pp 10–14, available at http://www.dfat.gov.au/dept/annual_reports/05_06/downloads/section_01.pdf.

³ Analysis: tsunami response – who didn't do what. *The Local* (Sweden's news in English), 30 March 2006, available at <http://www.thelocal.se/3421/>.

⁴ Catastrophe Commission website at http://www.katastrofkommissionen.se/html/the_swedish_tsunami_commission.html.

⁵ Lars Danielsson resigns, *The Local*, 30 August 2006, available at <http://www.thelocal.se/4739/20060830>.

⁶ Tsunami commission recalled, *The Local*, 20 January 2007, available at <http://www.thelocal.se/6247/> and Commission resumes tsunami investigation, *The Local*, 1 February 2007, available at <http://www.thelocal.se/6266>.

⁷ Relatives question DFAT's Lebanon efforts, *ABC Online*, 15 July 2006, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200607/s1687499.htm>; No safe way out of Lebanon: Gambaro, *ABC Online*, 15 July 2006, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200607/s1687529.htm>; No way out for Aussies in Lebanon: DFAT, *The Age*, 15 July 2006, available at

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/National/No-way-out-for-Aussies-in-Lebanon-DFAT/2006/07/15/1152637913548.html>.

⁸ Alexander Downer interview with Kerry O'Brien, Downer defends embassy staff, *The 7.30 Report*, ABC Television, 19 July 2006, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/s1691290.htm>; Ben Packham, Michael Harvey and Mark Dunn, Rescue ship double-booked, *Herald Sun*, 20 July 2006, available at <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,19847701-5006562,00.html>; and Rescue ship double-booked, ABC *Lateline* television program, 19 July 2006, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2006/s1691305.htm>.

⁹ Greg Roberts, Better safe than sorry, *The Australian*, 26 August 2006, available at <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,20323797-36335,00.html>.

¹⁰ Quoted in Jasper Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, Constable, London, 1970 edition, p 387.

¹¹ This story of this picaresque incident is beautifully told by Barbara Tuchman in *Pedicaris alive or Raisuli dead*, in *Practicing history: selected essays*, Knopf, New York, 1981 pp 104-117.

¹² Gore-Booth (ed.), *Satow's Guide to diplomatic practice*, Fifth edition, Longman, London, 1979, Book III pp 211 – 225.

¹³ Gore-Booth p 218.

¹⁴ Outbound statistics are from DFAT Travel Publications page at <http://www.tremedia.com.au/pages/106560114362923.html>. For a breakdown of long-term and permanent departures of Australian residents to OECD countries, see Australian Bureau of Statistics, *4102.0 – Australian social trends*, 2006, 20 July 2006, available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/7d12b0f67>

POLICY BRIEF

LOOKING AFTER AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

[63c78caca257061001cc588/3cf3335edc1a3f7fca2571b0000ea963!OpenDocument.](http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2005/051108_hurricanes_terrorism_and_drugs_charges.html)

¹⁵ Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer, Hurricanes, terrorism and drug charges: a day in the life of Australians overseas, Speech to the National Press Club, 8 November 2005, available at http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2005/051108_hurricanes_terrorism_and_drugs_charges.html.

See also Fullilove and Flutter, *Diaspora: the world wide web of Australians*, Lowy Institute, Sydney, 2004.

¹⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Chapter 11: Protecting Australia and its values, *Advancing the national interest*, Australia's foreign and trade policy White Paper, Canberra, 2003, p 119, available at http://www.dfat.gov.au/ani/chapter_11.html.

¹⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *In the national interest: Australia's foreign and trade policy White Paper*, Canberra, 1997, p 12.

¹⁸ Downer, Hurricanes, terrorism and drug charges.

¹⁹ Greg Roberts, Better safe than sorry, *The Australian*, 26 August 2006, available at <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,20323797-36335,00.html>.

²⁰ Australians urged to evacuate Lebanon, ABC News Online, 24 July 2006, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200607/s1695187.htm>. See also the transcript of Alexander Downer's interview on ABC 891 Adelaide, 24 July 2006, available at http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/transcripts/2006/060724_abc891.html.

²¹ See the Smartraveller website at <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au>.

²² See Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, *Bali 2002: security threats to Australians in South East Asia*, Canberra, August 2004. The report is available at

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/fadt_ctte/completed_inquiries/2002-04/bali/report/report.pdf.

²³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Chapter 7: Helping our Pacific neighbours consolidate their future, *Advancing the national interest*, Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, Canberra, 2003, p 93, available at http://www.dfat.gov.au/ani/chapter_7.html.

²⁴ Officials refused access to stranded Australians, *ABC Online*, 3 September 2005, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/cgi-bin/common/printfriendly.pl?http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200509/s1452548.htm>,

²⁵ Kim Beazley press conference with Kevin Rudd, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Parliament House, Canberra, 4 September 2005, available from Australian Labor Party website at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0905/pcl00050.php?print=on#>.

²⁶ Downer, Hurricanes, terrorism and drug charges.

²⁷ Six years later, on 18 July 2000, a former Khmer Rouge commander charged over the three deaths was acquitted, resulting in a formal Australian protest to the Cambodian Government a day later. See Khmer leader walks free, *BBC News Online*, 18 July 2000, available at

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/839161.stm>;

and Australia protests over Khmer Rouge verdict, *BBC News Online*, 19 July 2000, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/841765.stm>.

²⁸ Alexander Downer Speech at the launch of the Smartraveller Campaign, 22 April 2007. http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/transcripts/2007/0704122_smartraveller.html.

²⁹ Gore-Booth p 221.

³⁰ Figures derived from the DFAT budget papers by Dr Mark Thomson of ASPI.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hugh White is a Visiting Fellow at the Lowy Institute for International Policy and Professor of Strategic Studies at the Australian National University. He is a regular columnist for *The Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

From 2001 to 2004 Professor White was the first Director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI). Before that he had served as an intelligence analyst with the Office of National Assessments, as a journalist with the *Sydney Morning Herald*, as a senior adviser on the staffs of Defence Minister Kim Beazley and Prime Minister Bob Hawke, and as a senior official in the Department of Defence, where from 1995 to 2000 he was Deputy Secretary for Strategy and Intelligence.

LOWY INSTITUTE

FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

WWW.LOWYINSTITUTE.ORG