



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

COUNCIL FOR AUSTRALIAN-ARAB RELATIONS

ANNUAL REPORT 2006-07



Council for Australian-Arab Relations

مجلس العلاقات الأسترالية العربية



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Council for Australian-Arab Relations
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The Hon. Alexander Downer MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Hon. Mark Vaile MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Trade
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ministers

I am very pleased to submit to you the Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR) Annual Report for the period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007.

Yours sincerely

(Glen Simpson)
CAAR Chairman

31 October 2007

Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR)

Annual Report 2006-07

Letter of transmittal

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Introduction

The Council for Australian–Arab Relations was established by the Australian Government in January 2003 to strengthen ties between Australia and Arab countries.

As at 30 June 2007, the Council comprises ten members drawn from a cross-section of the Australian community. The Council Chairman is Dr Glen Simpson, Executive Director, Coffey International Limited. Dr Simpson was appointed to the Council in June 2006, and appointed Chairman in May 2007.

The Council is supported by a Secretariat located in the Middle East Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra.

Chairman's message

I am honoured to have been appointed Chairman of the Council for Australian–Arab Relations in May 2007. Since becoming a member in June 2006, I have seen the work of the Council expand, diversify and build on the successes of its activities since its establishment in 2003. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Ms Pru Goward, for her enthusiastic and committed work as a member since the Council's inception and as Chair from May 2006 to April 2007.

As at 30 June 2007, the Council comprised ten members. In July 2006 the Council welcomed as a member Mr James Langridge, Vice President (International), University of Wollongong; and CEO & Managing Director, Illawarra Technology Corporation Group of Companies.

The Council commenced its second three-year term with a busy year, both in current activities and in doing much groundwork to launch a number of significant initiatives that will be implemented through the next few years. These latter activities include the most ambitious phase yet of the Young Professionals Exchange Program, to bring up to 22 participants from across the Arab world to experience Australia's business world and its vibrant society; and the new CAAR Scholarships Program for postgraduate students from the Arab region. Furthermore, the Council expects that the response to these programs will call for their continuation beyond the life of their current cycles.

During the year CAAR was also pleased to assist in practical ways the enhancement of cultural understanding between Australians and the peoples of the Arab world, firstly through its sponsorship of an Australian Film Week in the Palestinian Territories, where the local community was given a rare chance to discover the quality of Australia's internationally renowned movies and the uniqueness and diversity of the Australian identity. At the same time, the Council's sponsorship of the prestigious *Arts of Islam* exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW opened a window for Australians on the complexity and beauty of Arab art and culture extending over many centuries.

A delegation of CAAR members travelled to the Middle East in April 2007. The visit was successful in raising the profile of, and interest in, CAAR's newer programs such as the CAAR Scholarships Program and the latest phase of the Young Professionals Exchange Program. CAAR's 'Explore Australia' kit continues to be an appreciated and popular initiative with education authorities in the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar. Interlocutors reiterated their keenness to direct some of their own scholarship students to Australian institutions. In Lebanon, the communities who will benefit from CAAR's irrigation reconstruction project in the Bsharre district were fulsome in their appreciation of CAAR and the Australian government. Even before commencement, it was clear to all that the project will have a significant and positive impact on the livelihoods of the community.

I am proud of the Council's work over the last year, and am confident that it will continue to broaden its activities with even more success, in the important task of strengthening understanding and cooperation between Australia and the Arab world.

Glen Simpson, Chairman

Council overview

CAAR mission statement

To promote between the peoples of Australia and the Arab world mutual interests and a greater understanding and acceptance of each other's cultures, values, beliefs and diversity.

CAAR objectives

In carrying out its mission, the Council aims to:

- create partnerships that promote people-to-people links with Australia in countries of the Arab region
- promote the mutual exchange of information and ideas of excellence between Australia and Arab countries
- develop and promote the engagement of youth between the regions.

The Council for Australian–Arab Relations (CAAR) currently comprises a Chairman and nine members appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with the agreement of the Minister for Trade. Council members are drawn from business, government and the academic community. The Chairman and members are appointed for a period of three years and serve on a part-time basis.

CAAR membership as at 30 June 2007



Chairman

Dr Glen Simpson, Executive Director, Coffey International Limited
(appointed as Chairman for three years from 15 May 2007)



Vice Chairman

Mr Roland Jabbour, Chairman, Australian Arabic Council
(reappointed as a member for three years from 7 March 2006)

Members



Mr Abduljalil Albaf, General Manager, Clubcafé
(appointed as a member for three years from 2 June 2006)



Mr Joseph Assaf, Chairman, Ethnic Communications Pty Ltd
(reappointed as a member for three years from 7 March 2006)



Mr Syd Giller, National Chairman of the Australia Arab Chamber of
Commerce and Industry
(reappointed as a member for three years from 7 March 2006)



Dr Fiona Hill, owner and director, Almanar Consultancy
(reappointed as a member for three years from 10 May 2006)



Dr Agu Kantsler, Director Exploration and New Ventures, Woodside
Energy Ltd
(reappointed as a member for three years from 10 May 2006)



Mr James Langridge, Vice President (International), University of Wollongong; and CEO & Managing Director, Illawarra Technology Corporation Group of Companies
(appointed as a member for three years from 11 July 2006)



Mr Peter O'Byrne, Chief Executive Officer, Austrade
(ex officio appointment)



Mr David Ritchie AO, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (ex officio appointment)

Retirements/Resignations

Ms Pru Goward - Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner:
appointed 5 May 2003, reappointed (also Chair) 10 May 2006. Resigned 21 April 2007

Mr Alfred Moufarrige - Managing Director and CEO, Servcorp Limited:
appointed 1 August 2006, resigned 24 August 2006

CAAR activities

Council priorities for the three-year period ending 30 June 2009 include:

- activities that promote Australia as a modern and sophisticated society and a competitive and high-quality destination for a range of interests that would include education, tourism, science, sporting activities and investment in those industries where Australia enjoys a strong international advantage
- promoting and supporting exchanges by young professional and business leaders in Australia and the Arab world
- support for public diplomacy and cultural activities that showcase Australia as a diverse and dynamic society
- focused visits by a CAAR delegation to a range of Arab countries, to identify and develop potential opportunities for cooperation
- other activities that encourage suitable commercial sponsorships for CAAR-supported projects.

Activities 2006–07

Performance

The core program areas for CAAR during 2007-08 included: society/social; education; business and commercial; cultural; and public policy (including media).

Outcome 1: Society/Social

Objectives:

- To promote people to people links between Australia and the Arab region.
- To encourage activities that generate economic benefits for Australia and Arab countries.

Key Achievements:

Bsharre Irrigation Project, Lebanon

Following the Israel-Hizballah conflict of July 2006 in Lebanon, the Council decided to sponsor a development project to help the Lebanese people in the reconstruction of their country. A scoping visit to Lebanon was conducted in December 2006, to identify a suitable project. In June 2007 CAAR commenced a water-sector infrastructure reconstruction project in Lebanon in the district of Bsharre, from where many Lebanese-Australians originate. Under the project, new municipal irrigation water storage facilities will be constructed in the mountains and irrigation pipelines will be repaired, upgraded and extended throughout the district.

In addition to CAAR's funding, the Australian Government is also providing funding through the Council for the project. Funding is also being contributed by World Vision Lebanon, with in-kind contributions from the community. The project will be completed in late 2008 and is being undertaken on CAAR's behalf by World Vision Lebanon.



View of Bsharre municipality covering the general area of CAAR's Bsharre Irrigation Project

Outcome 2: Education

Objectives:

- To promote within Australia an informed understanding of Arab society and vice versa.
- To develop and promote the engagement of young people between Australia and the Arab region.

Key Achievements:

CAAR Scholarships Program

(http://www.grminternational.com/lowBand/caar_scholarships/CAAR.html)

In June 2007 CAAR established a scholarships program to promote greater awareness of Australia in Arab countries and to build people-to-people links. The program is managed by CAAR's contract-provider, GRM International. The Council is making available a number of scholarships to postgraduate students from across the Arab world to undertake study in Australia for three to six months in fields of relevance to Australian-Arab relations.

Outcome 3: Business and Commercial

Objectives:

- To promote in Arab countries an awareness of trade and investment, and tourism opportunities in Australia.
- To promote awareness of the potential of Arab markets among Australian business people.
- To promote the mutual exchange of information and ideas of excellence between Australia and Arab countries.

Key Achievements:

Young Professionals Exchange Program (YPEP)

The CAAR Young Professionals Exchange Program is an initiative commenced by the Council in 2004, to provide opportunities for young Arab and Australian business people and/or university students to learn more about each other's contemporary society and business environment. Following on from previous years' programs, a contract for a new phase of the YPEP was signed with Australian Business International Trade Services (the international arm of the NSW Business Chamber) in November 2006, to bring up to 22 participants to visit Australia from across the Arab region, for several weeks of work-experience placement in Australian industry. Complex visit logistics and the search for commercial co-sponsorship extended implementation timeframes so that the visit program will take place early in 2007-08.

Outcome 4: Cultural

Objectives:

- To deepen understanding of the traditions, values and beliefs of contemporary Australian and Arab societies.
- To foster greater awareness in Arab Countries of contemporary life in Australia and vice versa by supporting and promoting cultural and heritage activities.

Key Achievements:

‘Arts of Islam’ exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW

CAAR sponsored key events held as part of the prestigious ‘Arts of Islam’ exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW from 22 June to 23 September 2007. The exhibition proved a very successful and popular showcase of the finest display of the arts of the Islamic world seen in Australia. It gave the Australian community an opportunity to experience rich and diverse artistic achievements from the 7th to early 20th centuries. Drawn from the collection of Professor Nasser D Khalili, the exhibition comprised over 350 masterpieces portraying the depth and beauty of the arts of diverse Islamic civilisations ranging from Spain and Morocco through North Africa and the Middle East to India, Mongolia and China.

As a major sponsor, CAAR funded a key symposium at the opening of the exhibition and a fund-raising dinner for 150 people, from which the Gallery raised approximately \$50,000 for the purchase of an acquisition for its collection. As guest speaker at the dinner, Professor Khalili spoke of his belief in the importance of art as a bridge between the east and western cultures. The Council felt that its sponsorship of the exhibition events had been an outstanding promotion for the work of CAAR.



L to R: Mr Geoff Wild (Deputy Chairman, Arab Bank), Professor David Khalili, Mr Lee Kennedy (Austrade), Mr Peter O'Byrne (CAAR Member), Mr Joseph Assaf (CAAR Member)

Australian Film Week in Ramallah

The Council was a major sponsor of the Australian Film Week held by the Australian

Representative Office in the Palestinian Territories from 19 to 21 April 2007. The Film Week made six seminal Australian movies available to local cinema audiences. The films were also subtitled into Arabic by the Australian Film Commission.



Mr Ben Scott (Head, Australian Representative Office, Ramallah) and Ms Lima Anfous (Public Affairs Officer, ARO Ramallah) being interviewed for Ramallah TV channel 'Al Shareq' at the launch of Ramallah's Australian Film Festival

Outcome 5: Public Policy (including media)

Objectives:

- To promote the work of CAAR in Australia and Arab countries.
- To raise awareness in Arab countries of contemporary Australian society, traditions and capabilities.
- To promote to Australians the importance of the relationship between Australia and Arab countries.

Key Achievements:

Launch of 2006-09 Strategic Plan and introduction of new Council members

On 16 August 2006 CAAR launched its new three-year Strategic Plan at a promotional dinner in Canberra under the auspices of the Hon Mark Vaile, then-Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade. The launch was also the occasion to introduce the Council's new Chair Pru Goward and several new Council members and to promote opportunities for corporate cooperation with CAAR. Guests included over 100 key figures from the business, academic, government, diplomatic and media sectors.

CAAR Delegation visit to Arab countries

A CAAR delegation, comprising then-Chair Pru Goward, CAAR members Roland Jabbour

and Abduljalil Albaf and CAAR Secretariat Manager Helen Smith, visited the UAE, Lebanon, Kuwait and Qatar from 10 to 17 April 2007.

Two postgraduate university students from Australia – Dr Kylie Baxter (Monash University) and Ms Renae Roberts (Queensland University of Technology) - accompanied the delegation, having been selected for their specialisation in subjects of relevance to Australian-Arab relations. They were provided with an opportunity to broaden their studies with practical experience of the region and to promote CAAR’s work to university counterparts in Australia and the Middle East.

The aim of the visit in Lebanon was to inspect CAAR’s proposed irrigation reconstruction project at Bsharre. In the Gulf the delegation developed commercial and educational cooperation opportunities with government and business interlocutors, and followed up with education authorities in the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar about progress on the introduction of the Council’s “Explore Australia” teachers’ resource kit into local schools.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The delegation had meetings with HE Dr Hanif Hassan, UAE Minister of Education; HE Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarah Al-Nahyan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research; and Mr Mubarak Al-Shamesi, Director General of the Abu Dhabi Education Council. Discussion focused on CAAR’s Young Professionals Exchange Program (YPEP) and the scholarships scheme offered by CAAR as well as the government’s Endeavour Awards program. Australian expertise in vocational and technical education (VTE), school administration and international teaching benchmarks were identified as emerging areas for cooperation with the UAE. CAAR’s “Explore Australia” teachers’ resource kit, launched in the UAE in April 2006, was being progressively distributed into UAE secondary schools.

The delegation also met with the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the UAE Academy, and welcomed the growing business interest in training and education opportunities with Australia. The delegation also toured the campuses of the University of Wollongong in Dubai and the Higher Colleges of Technology and was briefed on their operations in the UAE.



L to R: Dr Magdi Hafiz (CEO, UAE Academy), Abduljalil Albaf (CAAR member), Roland Jabbour (CAAR member), Eng. Salah Bin Omeir Al Shamsi (President, Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry), (then) CAAR Chair Pru Goward; HE Mr Jeremy Bruer (Australian Ambassador to the UAE), Dr Kylie Baxter (Monash University), Ms Renae Roberts (Queensland University of Technology)

The Chair addressed a luncheon gathering of 50-60 members of the Australian Business in the Gulf (ABIG) in Dubai, and the delegation also hosted a dinner for key Australian commercial representatives, at which Australian business was encouraged to partner with CAAR in its projects in the region.

Lebanon

The delegation had meetings with Mr Wael Tannir, Director General of Education, and Dr Youssef Dia, Director General of Technical & Vocational Training, of the Ministry of National and Higher Education. Both Australia and Lebanon recognised the importance of education and youth to their future national advancement. Exchange between Australia and Lebanon had been limited, because of geographic distance and Lebanon's francophone focus, but CAAR's programs were seen as an opportunity to change this and improve knowledge about Australia. The Lebanese business community could also play a role in the exchange of experts between Lebanon and Australia. Dr Dia expressed interest in the YPEP and the possibility of an exchange for education ministry staff. He also hoped for a cooperation agreement with Australia on vocational education.

The delegation spent a day with World Vision Lebanon, visiting CAAR's proposed irrigation reconstruction project in the Bsharre district of the northern Lebanon Mountains, accompanied by Ambassador Lyndall Sachs and staff of the Australian Embassy. The delegation also met with municipal officials and farmers, who with WVL staff provided a briefing on the geographic extent and the technical and educational aspects of the project, and the benefit it would provide to recipient farming communities. Community representatives thanked the Council for its generosity in helping improve the livelihood of the district through the project. Noting the large numbers of migrants to Australia originating from the district, it was hoped that CAAR's initiative would lead to a twinning of the communities in Australia and Lebanon.



L to R: Abduljalil Albaf (CAAR member); Kozhaya Hanna (World Vision Lebanon); Alex Fraser (Australian Embassy); HE Ms Lyndall Sachs (Australian Ambassador to Lebanon); Tony Matar (World Vision Lebanon); Fayrouz Geagea (Head, Council of Bsharre Region Mayors); (then) CAAR Chair Pru Goward; Fawaz Hanna and Fadi Keyrouz (Mayors in the Bsharre region)

The delegation also attended a dinner hosted by Ambassador Sachs with senior representatives of six of the major universities in Lebanon. As a result of contacts made at the dinner, Monash University (Australia) and Balamand University (Lebanon) have subsequently signed a Memorandum of Understanding covering research links, cooperation and the exchange of staff and students.

Kuwait

The delegation met with Mr Mohammed Al-Kandari, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education, and officials of the Ministry of Education. The meeting discussed progress on the dissemination and use of CAAR's "Explore Australia" teachers' resource kit into Kuwaiti schools, which had been launched with considerable success during the Council's visit to the region in April 2006. Ministry officials were interested to hear about the Council's proposal to develop a kit about the Arab world for use in Australian schools. The delegation's focus on education continued with visits to the Australian College of Kuwait, Kuwait University and the Hawally Autism School. Dr Nada Al-Mutawa of the Center for Strategic and Future Studies at Kuwait University encouraged the idea of universities in Australia partnering in media and women's studies with a Kuwaiti university or NGO.



L to R: HE Dr Ralph King (Australian Ambassador to Kuwait); Dr Alanoud Al-Sharekh (Center for Strategic and Future Studies, Kuwait University); (then) CAAR Chair Pru Goward; Dr Nada Al-Mutawa (Center for Strategic and Future Studies, Kuwait University)

The CAAR delegation also met with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and discussed vocational training and opportunities for professional exchanges. The Chamber encouraged visits by Australian delegations from business chambers and various industry sectors, such as education, training and tourism.

Qatar

The delegation met with senior officials from the Cultural Affairs and Private Education Directorates at the Ministry of Education, and the Supreme Education Council. They discussed the future placement of the "Explore Australia" teachers' resource kit into Qatari schools; the government's program to transfer government schools to the private sector; opportunities for school student exchanges; and the placement of Qatari scholarship students in Australian universities.

Issues raised in discussions with Dr Khaled Al-Hajeri, Director General of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, included opportunities for cooperation on vocational and technical education.

Administrative overview

Staffing

The Council is supported by a Secretariat located in the Middle East Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra. The Secretariat implements Council decisions and administers Council programs and activities. Enquiries concerning the Council should be directed to:

CAAR Secretariat
Middle East Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
RG Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
Barton ACT 0221
Telephone (02) 6261 2090
Facsimile (02) 6261 2248
Email caar@dfat.gov.au

As at 30 June 2007, the Secretariat comprised:

Ms Helen Smith Manager CAAR Secretariat	Ms Lauren Clayton Program Officer CAAR Secretariat
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Secretariat staff are covered by the human resource management provisions of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which include Occupational Health and Safety, training, the APS Values and Code of Conduct, and the Department's 2006-09 Certified Agreement.

Public information

The Secretariat maintains a webpage on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website at www.dfat.gov.au/caar.

Reporting

The Council reports to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Council has submitted an Annual Performance Report every year since 2002-03.

Finances

CAAR is not a legal entity and cannot enter into contracts, incur debts or spend funds. In 2006-07 the Council received program funding of \$500,000 through departmental appropriation, administered by the South & West Asia, Middle East and Africa Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Financial Statement at Appendix A provides full details of CAAR's 2006-07 activities.

The Australian National Audit Office examines the financial affairs of CAAR as part of its examination of the accounts of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Sponsorship

The Council did not receive any sponsorship during 2006–07.

Meetings

During 2006–07, the Council met in Canberra on four occasions:

- 16 August 2006
- 10 October 2006
- 8 February 2007
- 2 May 2007.

Remuneration

Eligible members receive a ‘Category 2’ daily fee for Council business at rates determined under the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973*, for part-time holders of public offices. Members are also entitled to reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred on Council business.

Freedom of Information

The Council received no applications under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* in 2006-07.

**Council for Australian–Arab Relations (CAAR)
Financial Statement 2006–07**

ACTIVITIES/EXPENSES	COST (excl GST)
Publicity, Promotion and Media	
CAAR delegation visit to the Middle East – April 2007	55 696.49
Strategic Plan 2006-09 – promotional launch – final payment	5 960.59
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$61 657.08
Business and Commercial	
Young Professionals Exchange Program	140 909.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$140 909.00
Education	
CAAR Scholarships Program – commencement payment	60 000.00
2 postgraduate university students – participation in CAAR delegation visit to the Middle East – April 2007	15 946.23
Update of 'Explore Australia' website	1 975.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$77 921.23
Cultural	
'Arts of Islam' exhibition – Art Gallery of NSW	20 000.00
Australian film festival, Ramallah	3 745.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$23 745.00
Development Cooperation	
Lebanon project scoping visit – December 2006	10 450.79
Bsharre Irrigation Project, Lebanon – commencement payment	100 000.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$110 450.79
Administration	
Council meetings (travel, administration)	34 425.72
Annual Report 2005–06	9 293.99
Promotional brochure and strategic plan 2006–09 – final payment	7 124.84
Air freight – 'Explore Australia' kits	2 010.38
Advertising – CAAR Scholarships EOI	12 212.64
General administration (official entertainment, VIP gifts, promotional banners, stationery etc)	7 567.47
Sitting fees (2005–06 sitting fees also paid in 2006–07)	10 736.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$83 371.04
TOTAL expenditure	\$498 054.14
Budget allocation	\$500 000.00