



## **GLOBAL HEADS OF MISSION MEETING FACTS**

### **Purpose of the meeting?**

Australian ambassadors will meet for a Global Heads of Mission Meeting from 28-30 March in Canberra, state and territory capitals, and rural and regional Australia.

It will bring together for the first time our ambassadors, high commissioners and consuls-general to discuss foreign, trade and development policy objectives and the global environment in which we are seeking to achieve them.

They will make a direct contribution to the formulation of the Foreign Policy White Paper that will define how we maximise our engagement with, and influence in, the world to advance our national interests.

### **What is in the program?**

Ambassadors will participate in discussions in Canberra involving ministers and outside stakeholders on our responses to challenges in foreign policy; trade, investment and economic diplomacy; innovation; security; counter-terrorism; and global development.

After the Canberra component, they will travel to state and territory capitals, and regional and rural Australia, to meet business and community groups, explain how the work we do overseas delivers benefits to all Australians and seek feedback on how DFAT can better serve the community.

Our people are visiting places like Karratha (WA), Naracoorte (SA), Devonport (TAS), Mildura (VIC), Wagga (NSW) and Mackay (QLD).

### **What will the meeting achieve?**

The meeting will allow DFAT to consolidate views across our diplomatic network and identify new challenges and opportunities during a time of significant change globally. Participants will contribute to the formulation of the Foreign Policy White Paper and test its assumptions.

Engagement with domestic stakeholders in state and territory capitals, and regional and rural Australia will assist us in testing our policy settings, and advance commercial and trade interests.

We will also consider the department's far-reaching corporate modernisation and reform agenda.

### **Why not use teleconferencing?**

While DFAT is increasingly using video, online and teleconferencing to conduct meetings, in this instance our ambassadors will discuss sensitive issues that necessitate secure, face-to-face interactions. A number of Australian embassies are in countries with poor telecommunications infrastructure, making online communication impractical.

### **Has this been done before?**

While this is the first time we have recalled our ambassadors to Canberra, meetings of this kind are a well-established practice among foreign services including the UK, the US, China, Russia, The Netherlands, India, France, South Korea, Indonesia, Germany and New Zealand.

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### **Are all of the Ambassadors coming?**

All ambassadors, with the exception of a few whose terms are about to expire, will attend the meeting.

### **What will it cost?**

All costs will be met through existing funds – there is no new money attached to this initiative. The cost in Canberra to host the meeting will be about \$70,000, covering venue costs, catering and guest speaker requirements. The cost of flights and accommodation for officials will be approximately \$1.1 million which will be fully absorbed by DFAT. Flights and accommodation costs will be funded by each Post from within existing travel budgets. These costs have been offset by not holding meetings that would otherwise bring ambassadors back to Canberra, saving around \$400,000.

### **What happens if there is a crisis overseas and all our Ambassadors are away?**

The department has well-established contingency plans in place to allow it to respond effectively to crises overseas, including occasions when key staff, such as ambassadors, are absent. We have capable deputies at each post.