

Please send to PGPD secretariat on email secretariat@pgpd.asn.au or fax 02 6282 8933.

Title of conference / study tour	Asian Parliamentarians' Workshop on HIV/AIDS with a focus on transparency and accountability.
Name of participant	Hon. Ian Hunter MLC
Dates attended	24 and 25 January 2007
Location	Bangkok
Purpose of the meeting/conference	
<p>To discuss:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. factors contributing to the growth in HIV infection in the region,2. prevention strategies and social, political and religious barriers to their implementation,3. the meaning of transparency and accountability in the face of the HIV epidemics of the region,4. corruption and misdirection of donor funds,. <p>Key outcomes relevant to PGPD:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Anticipated women parliamentarians' conference in China later this year.2. Donor funds are sometimes directed to politically more palatable programmes at the expense of urgent and strategic intervention – if more controversial – programmes.3. It is important Australian politicians understand the different social/political climate in some countries prevents open discussion of HIV/AIDS issues – seriously impacting on prevention programmes. While Vietnam and Thailand and Cambodia seem to be able to meet this challenge, countries such as India, Pakistan and others face many barriers, not the least being religious.4. Australian parliamentarians should understand the importance of supporting harm reduction strategies in the region along with the treatment programmes that are being carried out. Other donor countries have abandoned the harm reduction approach despite the arguments concerning harm reduction's being conclusively in favour of stemming epidemics (Alex Wodak, Toronto AIDS Meeting, 2006 and President Clinton, Toronto AIDS Meeting, 2006).	

Feedback to PGPD Secretariat regarding conference/ study tour organisation, relevance, and impact

1. Organisation was excellent.
2. I – personally – learnt a lot on the epidemic in Asia/Pacific. However, it was hard to see how the conference benefited from Australia's being there with regard to managing the epidemics in the countries that were represented. Our experience with HIV/AIDS is very different from, say, Pakistan. There isn't a lot we can say to Muslim countries on how to handle their issues concerned with religious law – whereas Thailand and Cambodia (whilst Buddhist) had more relevant experiences to share. The presentations concerning the use of advocates and the advocacy process should have been of benefit to numbers of the delegates. A paper for the peer reviewed literature concerning this topic, is in preparation and should be of assistance to regional parliamentarians.
3. Nonetheless – it was a very valuable for the parliamentarians from other countries to share their frustrations about how to deal with these issues politically, and to be able to support them. Some Australian examples in addressing the epidemics are cited a successes.
4. Australia has much to offer in sharing the processes for good governance in government and in the management of donor resources.

Possible actions following conference/ study tour

- Speak:
 - In the next meeting of the PGPD
 - In parliamentary debates
 - To constituents, party, other parliamentary colleagues
- Write recommendations to relevant Ministers
- Put questions on notice or in estimates hearings
- Sponsor a Private Member's Motion
- Organise an event in Parliament
- Issue a press release and organise a press conference upon your return
- Write articles based on your study tour experiences and what you have learned for: newspapers, parliamentary media, party media, electorate newsletters etc

Personal actions/ follow-up to the conference/study tour (if any)

1. I am assisting Professor Elizabeth Dax to meet with the SA Health Minister on her visit to Adelaide on the 5th of February.
2. When I next meet with the AIDS Council, I will raise with them issues of transparency and accountability in Australian NGOs, with a view to how transferable such systems may be to, for example, PNG.

Recommendations for PGPD in light of conference e.g. letter to Minister, parliamentary motion etc

1. PNG needs more directed assistance. Medical laboratories are not well maintained and run and HIV diagnoses are not reliable.
2. PGPD should consider lobbying the federal government not only to increase funding to PNG for HIV/AIDS but to also support to greater levels sending teams to PNG to establish and train primary health care teams.
3. It is in the interests of PNG if Australia monitors collaboratively and closely how and where our donor aid is spent.
3. It is clear that the Asian Parliamentarians are not well versed in the processes of good governance and this could be followed through with supporting the Asian Parliamentarians groups and perhaps in supporting particular countries to attain improved governance (including transparency and accountability)