

NEWSFEED

Thousands respond to child support survey

Almost 10,000 people have responded to a parliamentary inquiry's call for feedback by participating in a questionnaire about Australia's child support system.

The House of Representatives Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee is examining how the scheme works and whether it could be improved, especially for high-conflict families.

Around 40 per cent of respondents are aged between 36 and 45, and roughly the same numbers of women and men have participated so far.

The committee is publishing on its website a 'snapshot' of some of the themes arising from the survey responses, the first of which is 'negotiation'.



Committee chair George Christensen (Dawson, Qld) said responses related to negotiation show a broad range of experiences with the Child Support Program.

"We want to give people an idea of the stories and experiences that people are telling us, and as time goes on, we will publish more summaries with other themes," he said.


Examples published in the snapshot include, "Money is a battlefield. It is a source of tension and anxiety for both parties," and, "We have been lucky we can be amicable and do it with a private treaty."

The committee will hold public hearings around the country which will also allow for 'community statement sessions'.


To read the full snapshot or to complete the questionnaire visit:

www.aph.gov.au/childsupport ■

LINKS

 www.aph.gov.au/childsupport

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Middle East markets beckon

Trade and investment opportunities explored

More than \$348 million worth of Australian sheep and goat's meat was served on the dinner plates of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iran last year.

According to the Sheepmeat Council of Australia, in 2013 Australia exported 59,777 tonnes of lamb and 40,911 tonnes of mutton to the Middle East.

In the same year, Middle Eastern countries also imported more than \$1.4 billion of Australian wheat.

Now, federal parliament's Trade Sub-Committee is exploring whether these figures represent a small fraction of an as yet untapped potential in trade and investment between Australia and the Middle East.

Sub-committee chair Brue Scott (Maranoa, Qld) said Australia is starting on the right foot.

"We've always had good relations but they need to be built on, and this inquiry will identify some of the areas that we need to work harder at," he said.

Mr Scott said the sub-committee's decision to leave undefined which countries constitute 'the Middle East' for the purpose of the inquiry was a deliberate one.

"We think that the countries in the Middle East region with a great interest in Australia will identify themselves," he said.

The private sector in Australia will target where they are looking to operate and extend business opportunities.

"We felt that if we described which countries we may leave one out that was important."

Mr Scott said this approach was already paying dividends. It has allowed the inquiry to consider evidence on the expanding automotive and textile industries in Morocco, not always considered part of the Middle East.

The inquiry will also consider the impact of new air links with the Middle East.



 **HIGH EXPECTATIONS:** Growth pursued in trade with Middle East

"The much improved aviation links with this region are helping to bring the Middle East much closer to many exporters and also bolstering the potential of our inbound tourism and higher education sectors," Mr Scott said.

It is clear that both regions would benefit economically from closer trade and economic ties.

Already, Australia imported nearly \$4.2 billion of crude petroleum from the Middle East last year.

In total, there was nearly \$15 billion in merchandise trade between Australia and the countries of the Middle East in 2013.