



R.G. Casey Forum

“R.G. Casey as Minister for External Affairs 1950-60, Fifty Years On”
9 February 2010, Government House, Canberra

Outcomes Report

This report summarises the outcomes of the R.G. Casey Forum hosted by the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) in Canberra on 9 February 2010.

The Forum brought together some of Australia’s most eminent academics and experts in international relations, former senior diplomats and government officials from various organisations to discuss the life, work and achievements of The Right Honourable R. G. Casey, later Lord Casey, as Australia’s Minister for External Affairs from 1951 to 1960. The Forum focused on his contributions and influence on Australian foreign policy thinking which have continuing relevance. It also discussed Lord and Lady Casey’s joint contribution to international affairs and Lord Casey’s relationships with key public servants Sir Arthur Tange and Sir James Plimsoll.

Highlights of the Forum included:

- Participation by more than 40 academics and experts in international affairs
- Involvement of former senior diplomats and former Secretaries and Directors of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Defence, Office of National Assessments and AusAID
- Recording and broadcast of the event by Australia’s Public Affairs Channel www.a-pac.tv
- Positive feedback from participants, with feedback scoring up to 4.9 out of 5.0



Participants in the R.G. Casey Forum at the Sir David Smith Meeting Rooms, Government House, Yarralumla, 9 February 2010



Objectives

The R.G. Casey Forum commemorated the 50th Anniversary of the retirement of R. G. Casey from politics and the post of Minister for External Affairs. Its objectives were:

- Discussing academic papers on the aspects of Casey's work and achievements as External Affairs Minister which have continuing relevance
- Assembling a group of distinguished diplomats of Casey's era, to set the scene of the 1950s and discuss the challenges faced by Casey and the Department of External Affairs throughout the 1950s and 1960s
- Considering the partnership of Dick and Maie Casey, and their joint contributions to Australia's national interests and affairs
- Preparing a publication of the proceedings

Participants

Speakers and discussants came from a variety of organisations including:

Government:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Academic Institutions:

- Australian National University
- Flinders University
- Australian Defence Force Academy at The University of New South Wales
- University of Melbourne
- University of New South Wales
- Deakin University
- Australian Catholic University
- University of the Sunshine Coast

Former Diplomats and Government Officials:

- Robert Furlonger CB, former Director-General, Office of National Assessments
- Richard Gardner, former Private Secretary to R.G. Casey 1955-58
- Pierre Hutton, former Private Secretary to R.G. Casey, 1958-60 and Head of Mission to Nigeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, The Sudan and Switzerland
- James Ingram AO, former Director, Australian Development Assistance Bureau and former Executive Director, UN World Food Programme
- Alfred Parsons AO, former High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Singapore and Malaysia
- William Pritchett AO, former Secretary, Department of Defence
- Professor Michael L'Estrange AO, former Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2005-09
- Peter Henderson AC, former Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1979-84
- Richard Woolcott AC, former Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1988-92



Format

The Forum was divided into five sessions:

- R. G. Casey and Australian International Thinking
- R. G. Casey and James Plimsoll: a Close Working Relationship
- R. G. Casey and Arthur Tange as Minister and Permanent Head
- The Substance and Relevance of Australia's Diplomacy and Foreign Policy in the Casey Era, 1951-60
- Dick and Maie Casey in Partnership

Feedback from Participants

Feedback from participants confirmed that the Forum was considered a great success. Based on the results of the evaluation, the Forum scored an average of 4.6 out of 5, making it one of the AIIA's most successful events. Organisation and venue received the highest scores, with a score of 4.9 out of 5. Participants also rated quality of discussion very highly, receiving a score of 4.7 out of 5.

Feedback received included:

“The personal reminiscences were a highlight – this made a personal connection with the Caseys, which won't be possible in a few more years.”

“It was a wonderful occasion and I have you to thank for getting me there.”

“(I have a) much better understanding of the Casey era and its relevance to today.”

“I wish to express the pleasure I got and will retain from the Forum. The organisation was brilliant.”

“Listening to the former colleagues of Casey and the reflections of former diplomats presented a array of views on the significance of Casey, and greatly improved my understanding of the era.”

Outcomes

Proceedings were recorded by Australia's Public Affairs Channel and were broadcast multiple times on Austar, Foxtel and over the internet at www.a-pac.tv. A DVD has also been prepared which can be distributed to those unable to attend the event.

A publication of the proceedings is currently under preparation to take discussions to a wider audience.

The Forum demonstrated that an event focussed on significant historical figures and periods can be successful and should be considered for a regular place in the AIIA's annual calendar.



Acknowledgements

The R.G. Casey Forum was made possible through the generous support of:

- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- The AIIA's Patron and Visitor, the Governor-General Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, and the staff of Government House, Canberra

The Australian Institute of International Affairs would like to thank all participants in the Forum, particularly speakers and moderators.

Thanks also to the organising Sub-Committee comprised of:

- Mr John Robbins, National Deputy Director
- Mr Zeng Fei He, Research Intern
- Ms Anna Jamieson-Williams, Research Intern
- Ms Beverly Ng, Research Intern

Special thanks are due to Mr Peyton Butler, Property Manager, Government and Admiralty Houses who provided outstanding assistance to the event.



From Left: Richard Woolcott AC, Robert Furlonger CB, Pierre Hutton and Gary Woodward offer personal insights of their experiences of R. G. Casey