

Foreword

The Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) is an independent, non-profit organisation seeking to promote interest in and understanding of international affairs in Australia. The AIIA was formed in 1924, established as a federal body in 1933, and is the only nation-wide organisation of its kind in Australia. It is financed by members' contributions, a small government subvention, and tax-deductible donations from individuals and businesses. The Institute provides a forum for discussion and debate but does not seek to formulate or promote its own institutional views. It arranges programs of lectures, seminars, conferences and other discussions, and sponsors research and publications.

In 2006, the Council of the Canberra Branch of the AIIA initiated a lecture series of former secretaries of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Canberra branch benefited from the fact that a number of the former secretaries had remained resident in Canberra and continued to be members of the AIIA. It was thought that this was too good an opportunity to miss and so the lecture series was formulated.

In the end we have been very fortunate to obtain the participation of five of the eight living former secretaries. Over the period May to November 2006, Mr Peter Henderson AC, Mr Richard Woolcott AC, Dr Stuart Harris AO, Mr Philip Flood AO and Mr Michael Costello AO made presentations to members of AIIA at the national headquarters, Stephen House, Canberra.

We at the AIIA believe that the lecture series has been a particularly valuable contribution to the history of the administration of the foreign policy in Australia during the last 28 years, since the time Mr Henderson was appointed secretary of the then Department of Foreign Affairs in 1979. Never before have the experiences of so many former secretaries of Foreign Affairs, and its successor Foreign Affairs and Trade, been brought together in this way. Sadly, one secretary who served in this period, Dr Peter Wilsenski, died in 1994 after ill health cut short his term as secretary from 1992–93. We were also unable to schedule Dr Ashton Calvert, secretary from 1998–2006, before his tragic death in 2007.

The series covers the watershed amalgamation of the Department of Foreign affairs with the Department of Trade in 1987. A number of the speakers also provided some fascinating insights into major foreign policy issues that occurred over this momentous period in world history, which included the end of the Cold War, continuing problems in the Middle East, developments in Indonesia and the South Pacific and the rise of China.

The former secretaries have graciously agreed to have their speeches recorded in this volume and we extend our thanks to them for that. I would particularly

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like to congratulate Mr Trevor Wilson and Council Vice President Mr Graham Cook, who together shouldered the major burden in organising the events and who have now edited this volume. I would also like to thank the national office of the AIIA for the financial support in producing the publication.

Ian Dudgeon

President AIIA Canberra Branch

& member of the AIIA National Executive