To: **Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee**

Subject: **The administration, management and objective of Australia's overseas development programs in Afghanistan in the context of the 'Transition Decade'**

16 September 2012

Dear Senate Committee,

The Liaison Office (TLO)—a previous partner of AusAid in Uruzgan—hereby would like to correct the public record on some erroneous information provided by AusAID to the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence And Trade Legislation Committee in a meeting on 31 May 2012.

On p.51 of the transcripts of the hearing, Senator Kroger requested information about the termination of the contract with "The Liaison Office."

> **"Senator KROGER:** Would you elaborate on what you define as lack of performance.
>
> **Mr Baxter:** A lack of performance really came down to the late provision of material and the consistent missing deadlines to provide material. When we sought to address those issues of poor performance by giving extensions, even the extended deadlines were not met. We should have received 17 reports between November 2010 and April 2012; we received six. As I said earlier, where programs do not work we will try to reform them or we will cut them. We tried to reform this by giving extra time to TLO to produce reports, but they consistently missed the extended deadlines."

TLO acknowledges that some deadlines indeed were missed, a problem which it was internally addressing and had tried to discuss with AusAID in terms of requesting a change in budget for additional staff. Part of the problem was that TLO's budget had the same number of staff for all three years, when research deliverables were far more numerous in the first year. Furthermore donor expectations (especially those of AusAID) went above and beyond what TLO had delivered to the Dutch government in the four years of its engagement (2006-2010), which lead to an increase in report size and more severe revisions. Nonetheless, TLO stands by the quality of its reports.

This aside, **TLO would like to correct the record on the number of reports submitted to AusAID**. It submitted **a total of 12 research and one Monitoring/Evaluation reports (thus 13 in total**; over double the 6 claimed; see Appendix I for details). In addition TLO submitted 7 peacebuilding reports that were not part of the contract agreement in order to keep donors abreast of peacebuilding activities.

Furthermore, TLO does not follow the mathematics of what was required vs. submitted, as several changes had been agreed upon prior to project closure. These are outlined in Table 1 below. Thus, the total report requirement was between 14 (after changes) to 19 (in

contract) research reports and 16 (after requested changes) to 23 (in contract) when including the Monitoring/Evaluation (M/E) reports. None of these figures amounts to the 17 reports AusAID noted above as 'should have been received', which is puzzling to TLO.

Table 1: Overview of TLO Report requirements vs. submissions (see Appendix I for details)

Reports at Project Closure	Contract	Agreed upon changes	Submitted	Explanatory Note
Quarterly Reports	6	5	5	One report merger was agreed upon
Manteqa reports	8	4	4	(1 manteqa, 3 districts) – Geographic area was covered by all reports, not other districts requested
Policy papers	4	4	2	new topics never stipulated
Annual report	1	1	1	18 months instead of 12 months report submitted
Sub-Total Research	**19**	**14**	**12**	
M/E reports	4	2	1	contract closed before submission of second report
All REPORTS	**23**	**16**	**13**	not accounting for lack of clarity in the manteqa vs. district reports, and policy vs. research paper

As to the discussion over the **release date of the Annual report** (p.52 of Senate Hearing records):

> "**Senator KROGER:** Have you released that report yet?
>
> **Mr Baxter:** I think it is due for release shortly. We have certainly signed off on a final draft of it, but I think it is due for release shortly.
>
> **Mr McDonald:** We are just waiting for it to be put on the Liaison Office website. We are expecting that any day. It was not up yesterday, but I am not sure if it has gone up since.
>
> **Senator KROGER:** Can you table the report?
>
> **Mr McDonald:** We do not have it. They have not yet released it.
>
> **Senator KROGER:** You have not received the report?
>
> **Mr McDonald:** We received a draft of the report, which we provided comment on, which is standard practice. It is now the Liaison Office that actually releases the report. They release it on their website.
>
> **Senator KROGER:** I understand it is a fairly public document. I have the report here, which might be able to help you, Mr McDonald.
>
> **Mr Baxter:** The version that you have is not the final authorised report. We have a process that we go through for approving reports for publication. The approved report will go on the TLO website when it is finalised."

As the e-mail exchange in Appendix II documents, **the TLO Annual report was made public on Sunday, 27 May 2012** – four days prior to the Senate hearing – and indeed TLO had to circulate the report on email due to problems with its website that took several weeks to repair. **TLO sent this report to AusAID on 24 May 2012** and receipt was acknowledged. So

indeed the report was very public at the date of the Senate hearing; and AusAID staff in Kabul was aware of this fact.

The only other minor correction is that Senator Kroger referred to The Liaison Office as an "international firm" (p.52), it is actually an Afghan non-governmental organization (NGO), established, and registered with the Ministry of Economy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.[1] International staff supports the organization especially in the writing of research reports; but they have never exceed 10% of TLO's total staff, which is comprised of Afghan citizens. Thus, the contract termination may have been somewhat unfortunate given that it cost around 130 Afghan employees (a majority based in Uruzgan province) their jobs and life subsistence. TLO tried to shift those it could to other projects, but they were in the minority.

If you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

[1] In accordance with Chapter Two of Afghanistan's Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (2005), as well as all other relevant provisions of Afghan law.

Appendix I: Overview of ALL TLO Reports Submitted to AusAid

Quarterly Provincial Updates (4 per year; 6 in contract by project closure), 5 submitted *(merging of two reports in one was approved by both donors)*

	Title	Time Period Covered	First Draft	Final/ Revised Draft
1	4/2010 Provincial Update	1 July-31 December 2010 (TLO chose to make a six months instead of three month coverage in order to have not gap from last Dutch-funded update	15 January 2011 (on time) *6 months covered due to funding gap*	29 August 2011 (public)
2	1/2011 Provincial Update	1 January-30 June 2011	9 September 2011 (late) *6 months covered due to team-shift*	18 December 2011 20 January 2012 (public)
3	2 and 3/2011 Provincial Update	1 July -30 September 2011 (merging of two reports in one was done with donor approval)	22 December 2011 (late)	26 April 2012
4	4/2011 Provincial Update	1 October-31 December 2011	31 January 2012 (on time)	26 April 2012
5	1/2012 Provincial Update	1 January-31 March 2012	26 April 2012 (on time)	Contract closed, no final version

Manteqa (and District) Reports (8 manteqas in 3 districts requested): Tirin Kot District (4): Mehrabad; Darafshan; Tirin Kot centre; Garm Ab Nawa; Chora (2): Qala-e Ragh and Chora centre; Deh Rawud (2): Tangi Tarak and Dezak; **Donors requested a shift to district reports** *after first manteqa report, and then three district reports covering all manteqas were written.*

	District/Manteqa	Manteqa covered	First Draft	Revised/ Final Draft
1	Mehrabad Manteqa (32 pages)	Manteqa valley of Tirin Kot district	25 April 2011 (on time)	9 June 2011 29 August (public)
2	Tirin Kot District (127 pages)	Required manteqas plus Pai Nawa covered	31 August 2011 (late)	23 December 2011 (public)
3	Chora District (152 pages)	Required manteqas plus several major and minor ones: Awi, Gorjezai, Ashizai, SarabKotal, Khwaja Khadir, Karez, Telba, Shanoda , Nuri, Kamisaan	19 December 2011 (late)	26 April 2012 (no public versions)
4	Deh Rawud District (89 pages)	Required manteqas plus Lablaan, Myando, Shinghula-Bariki, Sekzai, and Tarak wa Yatimak covered	19 December 2011 (late)	26 April 2012 (no public version)

No clear response to TLO if this was sufficient or more reports were required given the shift in report focus. Furthermore, it is important to note that the manteqa reports are also shorter in page number than district reports, due to their smaller geographic coverage. If one takes the Mehrabad report as a reference point, then one would have expected that all 8 reports would come to about 250-300

pages. TLO submitted three district reports that combined amount to a total of 368 pages.
A manteqa is a traditional geographic and political territory, which in Uruzgan tends to correspond roughly to valleys.

Policy Papers (4 per year): *(traditionally TLO policy papers are 20-25 pages)*

	Paper Topic	Type	Draft	Revised/ Final Version
1	Afghan Local Police (33 pages)	Policy Paper (1/2011)	19 May 2011 (on time)	26 April 2012 (no public version)
2	Transport Economy (81 pages)	Policy Paper (2/2011)	29 August 2011 (late)	24 December 2011 (agreed as public version)

TLO noted to donors that what was requested (especially the second paper) was more similar to a longer research than shorter police paper, but this was never addressed. Also the two topics for the final two papers were never designated when they were dropped from the requirements. TLO had raised the issue of converging expectations with donors but this was never addressed. In terms of volume (page numbers) the two papers with a total of 114 pages are within what would have been expected from four shorter policy papers (80-100 pages).

Annual Report (one per year) – more content requested than previous reports, which was 73 pages

1	Annual report (18 Months instead of 12 months period); covering 1 August 2010 – 31 December 2011	August-2010 to End 2011 (164 pages)	22 January 2012 (late for annual; on time for 18 months report)	26 April 2012 27 May 2012 (public)

M/E Reports (4 quarterly in contract, changed to two annual per year)
First Half-Year *submitted on 31 October 2011*; second one was pushed from 2011 to 2012 and contract was cut before report could be submitted; data had been collected

Peacebuilding Reports (not part of contractual obligation, but nevertheless submitted)

Type of Peacebuilding Report	Submission Date
1. First Short Activity Update of Program Start-Up (November 2010 – January 2011)	13 January 2011
2. February-May 2011 (4 Months) Activity Report	13 June 2011
3. June 2011 Activity Report	19 July 2011
4. July 2011 Activity Report	2 August 2011
5. August 2011 Activity Report	7 September 2011
6. TLO Peacebuilding Note to Donor demonstrating progress of Year 1 Activities and proposal for activity adjustments to maximize impact / Justification to keep peacekeeping program)	31 October 2011
7. Grand Stability Jirga Report held in December 2011	31 January 2012

Appendix II: Email exchange about Launch of Annual Report

Sent: Friday, May 25, 2012 12:29 AM
To:
Subject: RE: Comments on the Annual Report [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Thank you Susanne,

I will be on leave from Saturday. I'll have to check out the finished publication from home.

Best regards,

Richelle Tickle
Development Advisor | Uruzgan Provincial Reconstruction Team

From:
Sent: 24 May 2012 11:39 PM
To:
Cc:
Subject: Re: Comments on the Annual Report [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Please find attached the report with changes and in PDF. We plan to upload it on our web on Sunday – we are still working to possibly get a better PDF copy.

From: Richelle
Sent: Thursday, May 10, 2012 5:53 PM
To: Susanne
Cc:
Subject: Comments on the Annual Report [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Dear Susanne,

Further to discussion today with Darian Clark at the Australian Embassy, please find below the two requested amendments to the Annual Report ahead of publication, in order to clarify the timeframe of the report and to ensure the accuracy of the representation of Australia's lead of the PRT (not the whole of efforts) in Uruzgan.

1. References to Australia "assuming the lead in Uruzgan" need to clarify that Australia leads the PRT but that the Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) is US-led. This could either be accomplished by the addition of language to reflect that what is referred to by leadership of the PRT, or alternatively more detail to separate CTU and PRT. The intent is to be clear that while Australia assumed leadership of the PRT Australia, the Combined Team Uruzgan is a multinational military effort that the US leads.

2. The effective date of the report (as listed on the cover) should refer to January, given that the research was completed by this time. This will ensure that the references to Governor Shirzad are situated, and do not require explanations re. new Governor.

Many thanks,

Richelle Tickle
Development Advisor | Uruzgan Provincial Reconstruction Team