

28 July 2025

Senator Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Minister Wong

I'm writing to raise concerns about the conduct of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade towards me during two peaceful and lawful protests that I made on public land adjacent to its property in Canberra on 14 and 25 July 2025.

On both occasions I was approached and intimidated by DFAT security for sitting by myself silently on the public footpath with a protest sign. DFAT told me to go away and claimed I was trespassing. On the first occasion of 14 July, DFAT called the Australian Federal Police and instructed its officers to remove me. The Federal Police officers told me initially that they had doubts about whether I was really trespassing. But after conferring with DFAT Security, they advised that DFAT had said I was "not welcome" and was "trespassing" and thus I had to choose between "moving on or arrest".

On the second occasion on 25 July, I sat in the same place on public land in the same peaceful manner. DFAT security approached me and intimidated me and a supporter who was filming me from the other side of the road. They said I was unwelcome, trespassing and had to leave. I provided a cadastral map showing I was not on DFAT property. They continued to assert that I was trespassing and spent a lot of time on their mobile phones. But the police did not attend.

On both occasions, DFAT clearly acted as if I was in the wrong when I was not. It forced my removal by the Federal Police under the false pretenses of trespass. This raises serious concerns about misuse of institutional power by an Australian Government Department to suppress an Australian citizen's right to lawful and peaceful protest in a public place.

I would also ask you to reflect on this: in addition to the legal, moral and citizens' rights contexts, is it appropriate for DFAT to treat a former senior public servant - someone with a 31-year unblemished record of Commonwealth service - with contempt and suspicion simply for engaging in peaceful protest? What kind of message does that send to current and former staff about DFAT's commitment to integrity, decency, and human rights?

And what message does DFAT's treatment of me send to First Nations Australians? Your Government publicly championed the Voice, asking Australians to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Yet when I, as an Aboriginal man, sat silently on public land, expressing my values, exercising my democratic rights and asking to be heard, DFAT didn't listen. It sought to erase my presence. That's not listening. Its institutional power used to silence a voice that was inconvenient.

I am requesting a formal response to the following:

1. Is it DFAT and Australian Government policy to treat peaceful protest on public land as trespass?
2. What instructions are DFAT security staff given regarding interactions with protestors on public land?
3. Was the AFP called during the second protest I made on 25 July? If so, on what grounds, and how was it assessed?
4. What protections are in place to prevent DFAT misusing government authority to suppress lawful protest and critique of Government policy?

I am copying this letter to Minister for Home Affairs Tony Burke MP and Attorney-General Michelle Rowland MP.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory Andrews". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Gregory Andrews
D'harawal man
Canberra

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