PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Trade Sub-Committee

MEDIA ALERT
Issued: 1 October 2014

Chair: Hon Bruce Scott MP
Deputy Chair: Maria Vamvakinou MP

Export Council of Australia discusses multi-billion dollar Middle Eastern trade

The Export Council of Australia will discuss Australia growing its $14 billion in trade and investment opportunities with the Middle East at a federal parliamentary committee public hearing in Canberra today (1 October).

Director of the Export Council Stephen Deady will appear before the Trade sub-committee for the inquiry into Australia's trade and investment relationships with the Middle East.

The Export Council submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade would welcome a resumption of the free trade negotiations with the Gulf States that stalled in 2009. The Council believes a Free Trade Agreement would help liberalise trade between Australia and Gulf Cooperation Council countries such as United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain, which have a combined population of 44 million and a collective GDP of US$1.55 trillion.

A lack of understanding of Middle Eastern culture and business practices may have contributed to some Australian export businesses placing the region in the "too hard basket", according to the Export Council. It wants the government to develop mechanisms to help resolve disputes and legal issues by using international legal standards instead of the domestic laws of Australia and Middle Eastern nations.

It also believes that government could develop suitable guides to educate Australia business people on negotiations skills, pitching strategies and export procedures that work in the Middle East. Australian exporters and business organisations could also benefit from government grant funding to help them access more trade opportunities.

The Export Council is also seeking more Australian ministers and diplomats to provide physical support on trade missions to the Middle East to help better promote Australian companies competing for contracts and tenders against well-backed companies from the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the United States that are long established in the region.

Public hearing

Date/Time	Wednesday 1 October 2014, 11:05 am
Location	Committee Room 1R6, Parliament House, Canberra
Organisation	Export Council of Australia

Live audio broadcast will be available at www.aph.gov.au/live

For media comment: contact the Trade sub-committee Chair, the Hon Bruce Scott MP on **(02) 6277 4949** (Parliament House)

For background information: Further details about the inquiry, including the full terms of reference and how to contribute, can be obtained from the committee's website at **www.aph.gov.au/jfadt** or by contacting the committee secretariat on **(02) 6277 2313** or emailing **jscfadt@aph.gov.au**.

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