

## **Background to the inquiry**

- 1.1 The Minister for Trade referred this inquiry into Australia's trade and investment relations with the Gulf States to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) on 14 August 2003. The Trade Sub-Committee (hereafter referred to as the committee) of the JSCFADT conducted the inquiry. The formal terms of reference are included on page xv.
- 1.2 The committee decided to examine seven countries in the region (Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). A map of these countries is provided on page iii.

## **Previous work on the Gulf States**

- 1.3 In August 2001 the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee of the JSCFADT undertook an inquiry into the Middle East which included the Gulf States. Although it was a wide ranging and comprehensive look at Australia's relations with the region it did have a chapter focusing on Australia's trade relationship with the region.
- 1.4 Apart from Middle East inquiry, the region has attracted a relatively minor degree of attention from the Australian parliament. Recent changes in the trading relationship, including the dramatic growth in sales of Australian elaborately transformed manufactures (ETMs), have prompted this renewed interest in the region.

## **Inquiry process**

- 1.5 The inquiry was advertised in major Australian newspapers and in the Arabic and Farsi language press in late 2003. The advertisement outlined the inquiry and sought written submissions from the public.
- 1.6 The committee held the first of four public hearings on 29 March 2004 in Canberra. On 7 April one public hearing was held in Sydney and one in Melbourne. The final public hearing was held in Canberra on 21 June 2004.

## **Parliamentary delegation to the Gulf States**

- 1.7 During the course of the inquiry the parliament supported the visit of a delegation from the Trade Sub-Committee to five of the seven countries in this inquiry.
- 1.8 The Report of the Parliamentary Delegation to the Gulf States has been published separately from this report but the evidence gained during the course of the visit is integral to this report and accordingly has been incorporated.
- 1.9 The recommendations of the visit report have also been incorporated into this report as indicated in the relevant chapters.

## **Structure of the report**

- 1.10 The report is broken into four sections: an introductory chapter on the relevant states (Chapter 2), a chapter describing Australia's current trade and investment relationship with the region (Chapter 3), a chapter outlining which areas hold the most trade and investment potential (Chapter 4), and a chapter addressing particular trade and investment opportunities and actions which might create other opportunities (Chapter 5).