

Introduction

Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report contains the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties' review of the *Free Trade Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Korea* (Seoul, 8 April 2014), which was tabled in Parliament on 13 May 2014.
- 1.2 The Committee's resolution of appointment empowers it to inquire into any treaty to which Australia has become signatory, on the treaty being tabled in Parliament.
- 1.3 The treaties, and matters arising from them, are evaluated to ensure that ratification is in the national interest, and that unintended or negative effects on Australians will not arise.
- 1.4 Prior to tabling, major treaty actions are subject to a *National Interest Analysis* (NIA), prepared by Government. This document considers arguments for and against the treaty, outlines the treaty obligations and any regulatory or financial implications, and reports the results of consultations undertaken with State and Territory Governments, Federal and State and Territory agencies, and with industry or non-government organisations.
- 1.5 A *Regulation Impact Statement* (RIS) may accompany the NIA. The RIS provides an account of the regulatory impact of the treaty action where adoption of the treaty will involve a change in the regulatory environment for Australian business. The Treaty examined in this report required an RIS.

- 1.6 The Committee takes account of these documents in its examination of the Treaty text, in addition to other evidence taken during the inquiry program.
- 1.7 Copies of each treaty and its associated documentation may be obtained from the Committee Secretariat or accessed through the Committee's website at:
- http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Treaties/13_May_2014/Terms_of_Reference.

Conduct of the Committee's review

- 1.8 The Treaty action reviewed in this report was advertised on the Committee's website from the date of tabling. Submissions for the Treaty were requested by 13 June 2014.
- 1.9 Invitations were made to all State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and to the Presiding Officers of each Parliament to lodge submissions. The Committee also invited submissions from individuals and organisations with an interest in the Treaty under review.
- 1.10 The Committee held public hearings into the Treaty in Canberra on Monday 14 July and Tuesday 5 August 2014, Sydney on Tuesday 29 July 2014 and in Brisbane on Wednesday 30 July 2014.
- 1.11 The transcripts of evidence from the public hearings may be obtained from the Committee Secretariat or accessed through the Committee's website under the Treaty's tabling date, 13 May 2014.
- 1.12 A list of submissions received and their authors is at Appendix A.
- 1.13 A list of exhibits received is at Appendix B.
- 1.14 A list of witnesses who appeared at the public hearings is at Appendix C.