

20 September 2023

Committee Secretariat
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Dear Committee Members,

Re. Submission from Medicines Australia on the Australian Government's approach to negotiating trade and investment agreements

Medicines Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Australian Government's approach to negotiating trade and investment agreements.

Medicines Australia is the peak industry body for the research-based innovative pharmaceutical industry in Australia. Our members research and develop, manufacture and supply medicines and vaccines that help keep Australians productive, healthy, and out of hospital. Our industry employs tens of thousands of highly skilled Australians, invests millions of dollars in research and development,¹ and generates billions in exports.²

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how interconnected the health of a population is to the health of the economy. Additionally, it emphasised the critical role innovative medicines played during, and coming out of a health crisis. The relationship between health and economy should be a key principle that underpins how the Australian Government develops a negotiating mandate and framework (ToR a.), and how the economic, social, and environmental impacts of an agreement are considered and acted upon. (ToR e.) The Australian Government's approach to negotiating trade and investment agreements can provide opportunities to increase the positive impact the innovative pharmaceutical industry has on the health and wealth of Australians.

A mutually agreed set of principles lays the foundation for successful trade agreements. Medicines Australia supports principles to trade and investment agreements that broadly align with our international counterparts at the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (APBI),³ and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA).⁴ Further, the principles are consistent with the Australian National Medicines Policy⁵, which fundamentally revolve around:

¹ https://www.mtpconnect.org.au/images/2022_MTPConnect_SectorCompetitivenessPlan.pdf

² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1199092/australia-value-of-pharmaceutical-exports/#statisticContainer>

³ <https://www.abpi.org.uk/international-trade-and-ip/international-trade/>

⁴ <https://www.abpi.org.uk/international-trade-and-ip/international-trade/>

⁵ <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-medicines-policy?language=en>

- ensuring all Australians have access to high quality, safe, efficacious and cost-effective medicines;
- ensuring Australia remains competitive internationally to incentivise the presence of industry; and
- recognising the value of our industry in advancing the overall health and wellbeing of Australians.

Increasing Australia's competitiveness as a global trading partner, strengthening the economy, and ensuring access to innovative health technologies requires open engagement with industry. Our members have strong international business ties and should be involved in the consultation process. (ToR c.) Constructive engagement with industry stakeholders before, during, and after deciding on trade policies and negotiating investment agreements, ensures transparency and accountability. A collaborative approach to negotiating mutually beneficial trade and investment agreements with trading partners is consistent with ABPI and EFPIA's approaches. (ToR i.)

Recognising the link between health and economic wealth, aligning with principles that benefit both Australia and our trading partners, and genuine industry engagement will help promote a prosperous and future-proof Australia.

If you have any questions about our submission, or if we can be of any further assistance, please contact Constantine Tablan, Policy Manager

Yours sincerely,

Constantine Tablan
Manager, Policy, Medicines Australia