



21 September 2023

Committee Secretariat  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Inquiry into the Australian Government's approach to negotiating trade and investment agreements**

The European Australian Business Council (EABC), headquartered in Sydney is a non-for-profit cross-industry business association which advocates for increased trade and investment flows between Europe and Australia, and an ambitious agenda for closer co-operation on business regulation and global challenges, including climate change and sustainable transition.

In this regard, we strongly support the ratification of the Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement (FTA) earlier this year, and equally strongly support the finalisation of an ambitious and comprehensive Australia-European Union FTA.

The EABC welcomes the Australian Government's engagement in extensive consultation with stakeholders, including representatives from various industries and businesses, before entering, and throughout the negotiation process. This dialogue has played an essential role to understand the specific concerns, challenges and priorities of Australian businesses operating in diverse sectors of the economy and helped formulate the negotiating mandate of the Australian Government. Of note it allowed to define key objectives, red lines, and priorities for the negotiations.

As the negotiations have progressed, the EABC has had the opportunity to regularly engage with the Australian negotiating teams, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has provided regular briefings on the status of the negotiations to the limit of what could be publicly shared. By maintaining close collaboration with businesses and industry stakeholders, this engagement has allowed for historical concerns and emerging challenges for business to be raised and considered, with the aim to enhance and secure new economic opportunities in a fast evolving geopolitical environment.

In this context we call for the Australian Government to continue to strive for the liberalisation of free trade and investment between Australia and the European Union. Of note it is key to increase further market access for Australian products into the European Union, to facilitate the temporary movement of skilled workers — a priority for many of our members, and ensure a level playing field for business notably in the sectors of energy and critical raw materials to empower further collaboration and investment in strategic sectors between like-minded partners.

It is important that these negotiations deliver positive outcomes not only in terms of formal barriers, but also on mechanisms to streamline regulatory processes, and more intensive co-operation to enable mutual recognition of standards, qualifications, and other areas.

If you require any additional information or comments at this stage of the Committee's deliberations, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

  
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