

Dear Andrew

In following up our earlier correspondence, and the outstanding question from Senator McKenzie I can provide the response following information:

Question: How is the Department of Education and Training and representative bodies such as Universities Australia brought into the planning for trade agreement negotiations to ensure the best outcomes for such an important and competitive export sector and what improvements can be made, if any?

Answer: The Department of Education and Training (DET) considers that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT's) approach to negotiating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) provides appropriate scope for it and for its key stakeholders such as Universities Australia to engage in the process.

DFAT consults with DET when developing the negotiating FTA mandates for Cabinet's consideration. Following the announcement and launching of FTA negotiations by the Minister for Trade, DFAT consults closely with DET during the negotiating process. These consultations provide the opportunity for DET to provide advice to DFAT about the key stakeholders, such as Universities Australia, that should be consulted with and/or invited to provide written submissions. DET is also consulted when the final FTA is submitted to Cabinet for its approval.

When FTA negotiations are launched, DFAT invites submissions from interested stakeholders, and conducts public hearings around Australia. This gives interested stakeholders such as Universities Australia the opportunity to provide input. In addition, DET is able to liaise with its key stakeholders, drawing their attention to the launch of FTA negotiations and soliciting their views. At the same time, DFAT and DET's stakeholder consultation, and the process by which DFAT collects information on stakeholder interests is ongoing, and not limited to a specific FTA negotiation.

FTA negotiations with the UK cannot be launched until the UK formally leaves the EU.

Regards

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