

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

006 – 12 July 2021

Topic: Engagement with business

Senator Kimberley Kitching

Question

We heard from business councils that understanding of foreign and trade policy within business and the broader community is generally poor. How do you engage with business and how might this knowledge gap be better addressed going forward?

Answer

Supporting and informing Australian business is core work for the the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the global diplomatic network. Measures introduced following the 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper* have resulted in strengthened public advocacy in support of our trade and investment agenda, greater industry engagement and a high-level dialogue with business on foreign and trade policy. The Department has further strengthened its business engagement to promote economic recovery from COVID-19. In Australia, the Department 's enhanced engagement includes:

- weekly [February-September 2020], later fortnightly [from September 2020], consultations with peak business bodies on political risk, market and policy developments, with a focus on supporting recovery from COVID-19
- biannual peak organisations' consultations, addressing a range of trade and trade policy issues, involving business and civil society representatives
- quarterly Strategic Dialogues with senior business leaders on foreign policy and security issues, with twelve Dialogues between December 2018 and December 2020
- occasional and on-request briefings with business and peak bodies on the geostrategic environment and market expansion opportunities
- consultations to explain and inform FTA negotiations, including meetings of the Ministerial Advisory Council on FTA Negotiations, which involves business and civil society representatives
- a joint DFAT-Export Council of Australia *Global Market Insights* seminar series, with six seminars on key market risks and opportunities held in the first half of 2021, with over 1000 participants
- publication of sixty 2021 country *Market Insights* snapshots produced by our overseas posts
- strengthening relations with the Business Council of Australia via DFAT's secondment program
- maintaining business inquiry email inboxes, including for free trade agreement queries
- working with industry to finalise a Services Exports Action Plan to address barriers and create new opportunities, and
- targeted publications and social media to support trade and open markets.