



17 December, 2025

Committee Secretary

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee,

Submission For The Inquiry into Strengthening Australia's Trade and Investment Relations with Africa

I am pleased to make this submission to the Trade Subcommittee's inquiry into strengthening Australia's trade and investment relations with Africa.

This submission draws on practical experience engaging with Australia's multicultural business ecosystem and African markets. It proposes a shift from a predominantly resource-centric engagement model toward a growth-partnership approach. It uses Nigeria as a reference point to illustrate wider continental opportunities across creative industries, technology, food and agribusiness, healthcare, education, and professional services.

A central theme of this submission is the role of African-Australian entrepreneurs as diaspora-enabled trade pathways, supporting Australian exports, reducing market-entry risk for SMEs, and enabling mutually beneficial knowledge, skills, and product exchange with African markets.

I welcome the opportunity to participate in further consultations or provide support as the inquiry progresses.

Yours sincerely,



Elizabeth F. Akinsanya

Founder, Multicultural Food Business Hub Australia



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Submission To The Inquiry Into Strengthening Australia's Trade and Investment Relations with Africa

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Executive Summary

Africa represents a significant and under-leveraged opportunity for Australia to expand trade and investment relations through partnership-led, value-creating engagement. With a population exceeding 1.4 billion, a rapidly growing middle class, and increasing regional integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), African economies are evolving beyond traditional resource-based trade toward innovation-driven growth.

This submission proposes a shift from a predominantly resource-centric model to a growth-partnership model, grounded in co-creation, skills exchange, SME participation, and long-term capability building. Nigeria is used as a reference market due to its scale and leadership in technology and creative industries, while recognising Africa's diversity and the need for country-specific approaches.

Africa as a Strategic Growth Partner

Africa comprises 54 internationally recognised sovereign countries, each with distinct political, cultural, and economic characteristics. However, common trends like urbanisation, digital adoption, entrepreneurship, and regional integration are reshaping African markets.

Australia's existing engagement has been strongest in mining, education, and professional services. While these sectors remain important, they do not fully reflect the diversity and dynamism of modern African economies. Peer countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, are expanding engagement in technology, creative industries, healthcare, agribusiness, and digital services through partnership-based models.

As African economies move further along the value chain, Australia's opportunity lies in diversifying its engagement and positioning itself as a trusted partner in innovation, talent development, and value creation.

Opportunities for Strategic, Multi-Sector Engagement

1. Creative Industries (Film, Music, Fashion, Art)

Africa's creative industries are increasingly influential globally. Nigeria's film, music, fashion, and digital content sectors illustrate how African creative intellectual property can scale internationally when supported by strong production, marketing, and distribution networks.

Recent international co-productions in music and screen content demonstrate the commercial potential of collaboration between African creators and global partners.

Opportunities for Australia include:

- Film and television co-production agreements
- Music, fashion, and digital content partnerships
- Creative technology, post-production, and IP development
- Skills exchange and global distribution collaboration



These partnerships support export revenue, youth employment, and soft-power outcomes for both regions.

2. Technology and Digital Innovation

Nigeria and other African economies have fast-growing technology ecosystems, particularly in fintech, agritech, healthtech, edtech, logistics, and software development. International firms already collaborate with African companies to co-develop scalable digital products.

Opportunities for Australia include:

- Joint innovation and product development
- Skills exchange and workforce collaboration
- Co-entry into African, Asia-Pacific, and global markets
- Collaboration on digital public infrastructure and regulatory innovation

This represents collaborative innovation, not extractive outsourcing.

3. Food, Agriculture, and Agribusiness

Africa's population growth and urbanisation are driving strong demand for food processing, cold-chain systems, packaging, agritech, and food safety expertise. Nigeria reflects wider continental needs, including in beef, dairy, and value-added food production.

Australia's established strengths in agriculture, agritech, food safety, and regulatory systems position it as a natural partner.

Opportunities for Australia include:

- Co-manufacturing and value-added food production
- Export of agritech, food safety systems, and expertise
- Knowledge transfer and training
- Reciprocal trade in specialty and culturally relevant food products.

4. Healthcare, Education, and Professional Services

Africa's demographic growth is increasing demand for:

- Healthcare infrastructure and services
- Digital health and telemedicine
- Workforce training and professional development.

Opportunities for Australia include:

- Health technology partnerships
- Clinical and professional exchange programs
- Vocational and industry-aligned education
- Online and hybrid education models co-developed with African institutions.

Diaspora-Enabled Trade Pathways: A Key Enabler

African-Australian entrepreneurs represent an **under-utilised strategic asset** for Australia's trade agenda. Australian-based business owners with deep cultural, commercial, and regulatory fluency across both regions are uniquely positioned to act as trusted market bridges.



Strengthening diaspora-enabled trade pathways would allow Australia to:

- Accelerate relationship-building and market access.
- Export Australian-based products, services, digital solutions, and intellectual property into African markets
- Reduce market-entry risk for Australian SMEs
- Expand non-traditional exports while supporting skills transfer and local capability building in Africa.

This approach positions Australia's multicultural economy as a competitive trade advantage, offering mutual benefit.

AfCFTA and Regional Integration

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is creating a more integrated African market by reducing fragmentation and supporting regional value chains.

For Australia, AfCFTA enables:

- Scalable engagement beyond single-country strategies
- Regional distribution and partnership models
- Reduced trade complexity over time

Engagement with AfCFTA-aligned markets such as Nigeria provides a gateway to broader continental opportunities.

Role of the Australian Government: Practical Actions

To support mutually beneficial outcomes, the Australian Government could:

1. Adopt a growth-partnership approach to Africa engagement beyond the extractive sectors.
2. Prioritise multi-sector opportunities, including creative industries and digital trade
3. Facilitate the engagement of SMEs and startups in trade initiatives focused on Africa.
4. Leverage diaspora-led ecosystems as trusted market bridges
5. Encourage joint ventures, co-creation, and skills exchange or transfer.
6. Support digital trade infrastructure and market-access platforms.

Conclusion

Africa presents Australia with a timely opportunity to establish balanced, long-term trade and investment relationships founded on partnership, innovation, and shared prosperity. By engaging across diverse growth sectors and strengthening diaspora-enabled trade pathways, Australia can deepen economic ties with Africa while supporting sustainable outcomes for both regions.