



Embassy of the United States of America

Canberra, Australia

June 25, 2020

Senator the Hon David Fawcett

Chair

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT)

PO Box 6021

Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Fawcett:

Thank you for your letter of May 20, in which the Committee invited a submission from the U.S. Government on your inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs, defense, and trade. As you know, this crisis has been unprecedented in modern history, in both the breadth and scope of its impact. It has upended economies and demonstrated the fragility of global medical supply chains. From the disruption of personal protective equipment (PPE) supply, to ventilator shortages and heavy reliance on imported active pharmaceutical ingredients, both the United States and Australia face challenges that need to be addressed in the post-COVID landscape. However, rather than bringing the U.S.-Australia relationship to a grinding halt, COVID has created new opportunities that have only accelerated our bilateral engagement.

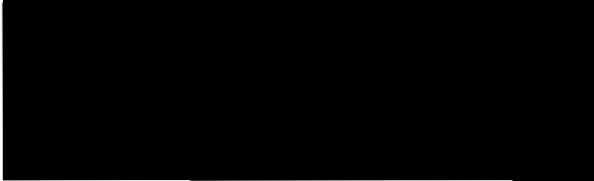
Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, American and Australian companies have worked together to create desperately needed equipment like testing machines, ventilators, protective gear, and specialized hospital beds. When international travel slowed to a crawl, U.S. and Australian leaders turned to technology to ensure our important work is not interrupted. Our leaders are speaking more frequently than ever before, collaborating on how to best restart our economies and coordinate our assistance to those countries that need it most. U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration assisted in expediting two critical PPE shipments from Brisbane-based Aspen Medical to passengers and crew isolated on board the Grand Princess, a cruise ship anchored in the San Francisco Bay. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Australian Federal Police have prevented millions of dollars' worth of COVID-related fraud and seized thousands of counterfeit medical supplies that would have harmed consumers in Australia and New Zealand.

The importance of stable and secure supply chains to the prosperity and security of both our countries has been highlighted by the pandemic. Although the U.S. Government's first and foremost responsibility is to the American people, facilitating the transport of medical equipment and supplies to our global partners has helped fight the COVID-19 outbreak and mitigate the impact of the crisis, while simultaneously lessening the risk of re-infection between our countries and maintaining critical supply chains.

The United States remains Australia's most important economic partner, especially now in the time of this pandemic. Total U.S. investment in Australia increased by four percent in 2019 and now stands at AUD 984 billion – more than a quarter of all foreign investment in Australia. The United States is also a trusted and reliable trading partner to Australia, with a strategic relationship hinging on our longstanding security alliance. The COVID-19 pandemic, while tragic in so many ways, has demonstrated the vital relevance and permanence of this alliance.

I hope this information assists the Committee in its deliberations. Please let me know if I or my embassy team can be of any further assistance.

With highest regards,



Arthur B. Culvahouse Jr.
Ambassador