



18 May 2020

Opportunities for strengthening Australia's relations with the Republic of France

Submission from the Government of South Australia

The South Australian Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee's (the Committee) inquiry into opportunities to strengthen Australia's relations with the Republic of France.

Introduction

On 5 February 2020, the Senate referred the Committee to inquire and report on opportunities for strengthening Australia's relations with the Republic of France, with particular reference to:

- a. increasing bilateral trade and investment, including future growth areas for exports and imports, and opportunities in the mining industry;
- b. enhancing political, security and defence cooperation, including through initiatives such as the Joint Statement of Enhanced Strategic Partnership between Australia and France signed in 2017, and the Strategic Partnering Agreement signed in 2018 for the Future Submarine Program;
- c. options for enhancing strategic cooperation, including in the Indo-Pacific region and through multilateral fora;
- d. Australian engagement with intergovernmental organisations headquartered in France including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO);
- e. opportunities to build on shared historical and cultural values and promote tourism, with specific reference to Commonwealth War Graves, cultural exchanges and people-to-people ties; and
- f. any related matters.

The Government of South Australia would like to provide comment on parts (a), (b), (d), (e) and (f) of the Terms of Reference to this Inquiry. The submission particularly highlights the state's defence and cultural connections with France and opportunities created through these connections.

South Australian context

The announcement in 2016 that the next generation of submarines would be built in South Australia, and that French company Naval Group had been selected as the preferred partner for the design of the Future Submarines Program (FSP), presented South Australia with a unique opportunity to maximise opportunities arising from the FSP and develop strong ties with France.

The State Government has taken a strategic approach to engagement with France to explore and maximise economic development outcomes, as well as broader opportunities and social and cultural outcomes for the state, across key areas such as:

- defence industry;
- research and education;
- advanced manufacturing technologies;
- tourism, trade and investment;
- food, wine and agribusiness;
- culture and the arts; and
- Government relationships.

The development of these opportunities has been underpinned by the development of close government to government relationships at the subnational level, including a sister region partnership with the Region of Brittany. The Australian Government's framework of strategic agreements with the French Government provides the foundation for the subnational relationships that South Australia has been able to develop.

South Australian response

(a) Increasing bilateral trade and investment, including future growth areas for exports and imports, and opportunities in the mining industry.

The 2016 announcements catalysed a significant increase in trade and investment dialogue between South Australian and French organisations, starting with the Defence sector and supply chain opportunities for the FSP, and expanding into other sectors. To capitalise on these opportunities, the South Australian Government has developed close and productive collaboration with Business France, and other French trade and industry bodies.

These relationships have increased awareness of each other's offerings and needs in trade and investment. It has created goodwill and trust and established clear pathways for exploring synergies and collaboration, which offer productive avenues for pursuing future growth in bilateral trade and investment.

Business France programs with which South Australia has productively engaged include:

- The VIE program: An International Internship Program, which enables French businesses to assign candidates to a foreign country for six to 24 months. South Australia has been a welcoming and supportive host for VIE interns. This has benefited both the interns and South Australian businesses with networking and commercial opportunities, as well as increasing people-to-people ties.

- Maritime Connection Days in Australia: launched in 2018 by the President of the Republic of France and the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia with the release of the *Vision Statement on the Australia-France Relationship*. It is an annual accelerator program to boost French investment and partnerships with the Australian maritime industry. South Australia successfully hosted the 2018 and 2019 delegations, with the standout outcome of French cyber security company Squad opening an office in Adelaide.
- Facilitation for French business delegations to South Australia.

Similarly to its collaborative relationship with Business France, South Australia also works closely with the Groupement des Industries de Construction et Activités Navales (GICAN) in Australia to support the further expansion of commercially prospective relationships between French and South Australian maritime defence businesses.

South Australia's primary objectives to support the national shipbuilding program that complement the initiatives with France include: ensuring future warship and submarine design and engineering centres are located in South Australia; developing the partnerships between world-class universities and industry to ensure ongoing ship and submarine design and technology development; establishing a sustainable shipbuilding supply chain through maximising local industry participation, independent exports and global supply chain export; and maximising the utilisation of the current facilities at Osborne and grow the precinct capability in line with future projects. This can be supported through collaboration with France by developing capability centres of excellence linking industry, government and academia in defence related areas supporting development, sustainment and enhancement of defence capabilities (diesel engines, platform management, combat system integration, battery technology).

While South Australia expects further growth in the defence sector with French businesses to be focused on the supply chain for the build and sustainment of the FSP, South Australia has identified future growth areas that present opportunities to build on this foundation of commercial relationships in the maritime defence sector.

The Australian Government's establishment of the Australian Space Agency in Adelaide has provided a focal point for the development of the Australian space industry. There are significant opportunities for growth in this sector through engagement with French businesses and French based organisations such as the European Space Agency, and Airbus whose main space activities are run from Toulouse. These opportunities may include jointly bidding on pilot projects for \$150 million Moon to Mars initiative and grant opportunities. Networks and partnerships with France in this sector are already established and provide a good basis for growth. For instance, the University of South Australia ran the ActInSpace contest event for the first time in Australia in 2018, and had registered to run it again in April 2020. The main event sponsors for this global hackathon are the European and French space agencies and Airbus. This provided opportunities to build relationships with the French space sector, and to enhance the international profile of Australian businesses and organisations. The winning team from Adelaide represented Australia, winning the international finals in Toulouse and beating 550 teams from 35 countries around the world, opening the door to key networking opportunities facilitated by Airbus and Aerospace Valley.

Cyber security is a niche sector with the potential for expansion through trade and investment with French companies. South Australia has a regional partnership relationship with Brittany, with both regions having emerging strengths in this area. Brittany is home to the "Pôle d'excellence cyber" – a national centre of excellence established by the French Ministry for Armed Forces – which has catalysed a network of over 500 companies and research centres specialising in cyber security. South Australia is similarly driving the growth of the cyber security sector in tandem with the development of the defence and space industries. The forthcoming opening of the Australian Cyber Collaboration Centre in Adelaide will provide further opportunities for leveraging relationships in this sector with French businesses.

South Australia sees opportunity for Australia to grow its economic relationship with France in the primary industries sector, both through building on existing relationships, and leveraging the EU-Australia Free Trade Agreement once concluded. South Australia has developed a strong relationship with the city of Bordeaux through the Great Wine Capitals global network. This relationship is based on the common strength of the wine sectors in Bordeaux and South Australia, and has enabled peer learning for South Australian wine businesses to achieve excellence in industry development and tourism. The partnership with Bordeaux has opened doors for South Australian wine producers and enabled the sector to increase its global standing and reputation. More broadly, South Australia anticipates that the successful conclusion of the EU-Australia Free Trade Agreement will provide a platform for further growth in Australian food and wine trade with France across the board.

In regard to mining, as identified in the Terms of Reference for this inquiry, and the resources sector more broadly, South Australia notes that the current base is relatively small - in the 12 months to February 2020 South Australia's exports to France included \$120 million of 'Confidential' items and \$3.5 million of copper cathode. Growth opportunities with France in this sector may be possible in technology and innovation. As an example, the University of Adelaide's Institute for Mineral and Energy Resources signed a strategic partnership agreement with French company Dassault Systèmes in December 2018 to collaborate on programs to explore digital solutions for mining and energy companies in Australia. This collaboration could provide a model for further development of partnerships in the natural resources industry for French companies with Australian business and academic communities.

(b) Enhancing political, security and defence cooperation, including through initiatives such as the Joint Statement of Enhanced Strategic Partnership between Australia and France signed in 2017, and the Strategic Partnering Agreement signed in 2018 for the Future Submarine Program.

The South Australian Government acknowledges the strong framework for collaboration with France provided by the 2017 Joint Statement of Enhanced Strategic Partnership and the Strategic Partnering Agreement. These agreements, and the 2012 Joint Statement that preceded the 2017 agreement, provide the basis for South Australia's formal relationships with various French government entities.

- The Government of South Australia and the Embassy of France's 2016 broad collaboration agreement;
- The Government of South Australia and the Regional Council of Brittany formal Sister Region Relationship established in September 2017. This has been an important driver to promote economic, cultural and education outcomes; the bilateral ties with Brittany have also enhanced the State's relationship with France at a National level.
- The City of Port Adelaide Enfield and the City of Cherbourg en Cotentin Civic Relationship Agreement signed in 2017. This has been key to developing partnerships and activities that support the Future Submarine Program by supporting Naval Group's growth in South Australia and its program of training Australian workers in its yards in Cherbourg en Cotentin.

These partnerships play an important role in facilitating the development of economic and cultural activities addressed elsewhere in this submission.

(d) Australian engagement with intergovernmental organisations headquartered in France including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The South Australian Government recognises the benefits of Australian engagement with international intergovernmental organisations. In regard to the OECD, the South Australian Department for Education benefits from participation, through the Australian Government, in the OECD's valuable education and skills work, including the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and the prioritisation of other OECD projects (i.e. Future of Education and Skills 2030).

South Australia also benefits from Australia's engagement with UNESCO. Designation of the Flinders Ranges as a UNESCO World Heritage Site would be a welcome step, building on the current designation of the Naracoorte caves as part of the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites World Heritage Site. Adelaide's designation as a UNESCO City of Music and membership of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network is a welcome acknowledgement of the breadth, depth and vibrancy of the city's music culture, its international reach, its history and its aspirations.

(e) Opportunities to build on shared historical and cultural values and promote tourism, with specific reference to Commonwealth War Graves, cultural exchanges and people-to-people ties.

The South Australian Government strongly supports the recognition and promotion of shared historical and cultural values with France, with particular reference to the Western Front. This shared history has presented opportunities for veterans and educational engagements to promote people-to-people ties. For instance, in April 2018 the town of Blangy-Tronville renamed its local school in honour of South Australian Private Arthur Clifford Stribling who died on the Western Front in April 1918 and was buried in Blangy-Tronville. The renaming service was attended by a South Australian delegation, including representatives from Tarlee, Private Stribling's hometown. This symbolical gesture greatly resonated with the South Australian community and in particular its veterans.

This shared historical experience is also recognised in South Australia's education system, including the study of the Western Front in the year 9 curriculum. The Premier's Anzac Spirit School Prize was established to encourage young South Australians from year 9 and 10 to connect with and maintain the ANZAC spirit. The fully funded study tour to France involves visiting the sites of the 1918 battles, the Australian Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, the John Monash Centre, as well as attending commemoration ceremonies.

The further development of shared cultural values and people-to-people ties through arts and cultural exchange is another area of priority in South Australia. This has been clearly demonstrated through the Adelaide Festival's three-year partnership with the Festival International d'Art Lyrique d'Aix-en-Provence which will provide a conduit to jointly creating arts programmes, promoting intercultural understanding and people-to-people relationships.

In 2018 and 2019 South Australia held the Adelaide French Festival providing high profile opportunities for arts and culture exchange and promotion of bilateral tourism opportunities. The State also works with the Alliance Française d'Adelaide, to promote French culture and language, and strengthen relationships between both communities.

The Art Gallery of South Australia has close partnerships with a number of French cultural institutions, including exchange of art works for joint intercultural benefits, most notably the 2018 *Colours of Impressionism* exhibition of key pieces from the Musée d'Orsay which attracted record breaking attendances and significant economic benefits to the State through tourism.

South Australia is currently in discussion with the Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade to identify projects to participate in the promotion of Australia's cultural strengths through the Australia Now program in France in 2021.

South Australia has also identified opportunities for enhancing people-to-people ties and tourism with France through sporting activities. The Tour Down Under (TDU) is the biggest cycling race in the southern hemisphere and attracts a large number of national and international visitors to the State. The TDU has developed strong relationships with key French, and France-based, organisations, such as the Tour de France and the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), which support its success as the opening world tour event of the UCI. These relationships include partnership with the Tour de France – e.g. the "Aussie Corner" activation at Villers Bretonneux in the 2015 Tour de France, and hosting several competing French cycling teams every year, including four Tour de France winners.

(f) Any related matters

Education

South Australia has identified a number of opportunities to strengthen relations with France including through formal collaboration agreements in education, research and vocational training, student exchange, and French language programs.

These initiatives promote the understanding and appreciation of culture and history and enrich students' and teachers' experiences through exchange of teaching materials and pedagogical practices. They also serve to increase people-to-people ties and enhance bilateral collaboration and socio-cultural engagements. They also have the potential to generate increased tourism opportunities with associated economic benefits.

In South Australia, 41 schools offer French language programs. A French bilingual program progressively implemented at Highgate School and Unley High School was set up to support the FSP. Both schools are members of the Australian Association of French English Bilingual Schools (AAFEBS).

The South Australian Government has formalised several agreements with French Government entities to provide a collaboration framework and facilitate bilateral engagement. They include:

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department for Education and the Embassy of France.
 - The MOU supports the teaching the French language in South Australian schools and includes the French Government's French Language Teaching Assistant Program, implemented in South Australia since 2018.
- 2017 MOU between the Minister for Education and three levels of government in Normandy.
 - This MOU supports the education of children of expatriate families working on the FSP in Cherbourg en Cotentin and South Australia.
- 2018 MOUs between the Department for Trade and Investment and the Regional Council of Brittany.
 - The MOUs relate to VET and higher education research programs.