

Senate Estimates

November 2022

Ministerial Statement: DFAT Trade Policy/Negotiations

After a decade of a Coalition government, Australia is more dependent than ever on a single market for our exports.

Placing all your trade eggs in one basket has proven to be a bad economic strategy.

The COVID-19 global pandemic, supply chain volatility which have been exacerbated by Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and Chinese trade blockages have exposed the growing risks for Australian exporters, jobs and prosperity.

With the Albanese Government at the helm, Australia is charting a new economic course which is responsible, more resilient and sustainable.

Diversifying Australia's trade and investment ties will make us economically stronger.

The Coalition government dropped the ball by failing to conclude parliamentary processes to enable entry into force of the Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement and the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement.

Unlike the previous Government, the Albanese Government is working hard to conclude all treaty and legislative processes to enable implementation of the UK and India trade agreements this year.

Given the trade deals are familiar to the Coalition, we expect unanimous support from the opposition benches in both chambers for the expeditious passage of relevant legislation.

Despite many years of negotiations, a Coalition Government failed to land a trade deal with the European Union.

In fact, negotiations stalled as a result of the Morrison Government's disrespectful treatment of a close ally and insipid approach to address climate change.

I'm happy to report that negotiations are now back on track and rapidly gaining momentum.

Australia and the EU are now on the same page when it comes to achieving high standards on environment and labour issues.

Both sides have expressed an ambition to conclude negotiations by mid-2023.

Within the Indo-Pacific, the Albanese Government is leading efforts to deepen and strengthen economic linkages.

The upgrade of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA) and the recently launched negotiations on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) are two examples.

Launching IPEF negotiations is a significant step in the future of greater economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Together, IPEF members represent over 40 per cent of global GDP and, for Australia, eight of our top ten trading partners.

It brings together the United States, North and South Asian partners including India, and importantly, our Pacific neighbour, Fiji.

IPEF will cover a range of new and emerging trade issues, including supply chains and clean energy.

The Albanese Government's objective is to become a renewable energy superpower, helping spur not just our own energy transition but our region's transition and the world's transition to net zero carbon emissions.

Facilitating the energy transition is at the centre of our trade policy. The IPEF negotiations and recently inked Singapore-Australia Green Economy Agreement demonstrate the Government's commitment to achieve net zero by 2050.

In summary, we are the Government of free, fair and open trade. We are committed to deepening and diversifying our trading relationships to strengthen

our economy. Australia is no longer a pariah when it comes to climate change; in fact, we are now considered a key part of the global solution.

The Albanese Government is of the firm view that trade must be a driver of inclusive economic growth and greater economic wellbeing for all Australians. It must deliver for the Australian people.