

**Budget Estimates October 2020: Opening Statement by Tim Beresford,
Acting CEO of the Australian Trade and Investment Commission**

Thank you Chair and the Committee for the opportunity to make an opening statement.

As a result of COVID-19, we are facing sustained global **collapse of trade and investment** flows. In **2020**, global trade flows are expected to fall by **10 percent** and foreign direct investment by **40 percent**.

COVID-19 has **dislocated and disrupted international supply chains**, which need to be rebuilt.

At the same time, the pandemic has accelerated businesses' **shift to digitisation and automation**, and brought about new business operating models.

The Australian Trade and Investment Commission has pivoted to support the Government priorities of helping **Australians** and **Australian business** respond to these COVID-19 challenges. I would like to recognize the dedication of all Austrade staff, both overseas and in Australia, who are focused on this effort.

From the onset of the pandemic, our staff overseas have worked tirelessly in support of consular efforts to **repatriate Australians**, working under the leadership and guidance of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

We have worked directly with **Australian businesses** to encourage them to commence **exporting, expand and diversify into new markets**.

Austrade has accelerated its 'digital first' agenda. We have delivered **160** webinars with over **13,000** participants since February **2020**; launched a **12** part digital Free Trade Agreement seminar series with **5,800** attendees; and delivered almost **10,000** general and tailored services to Australians businesses and potential investors.

Under the Export Market Development Grant scheme, we administered over **4000 grants** valued at **\$192.2 million**, including the extra **\$49.8 million** announced by the Government in

April 2020. To provide easier access for SME exporters to these grants, we are implementing reforms to simplify this program.

To respond to dislocated supply chains, Austrade is leading the **International Freight Assistance Mechanism**. As at **21 October**, IFAM has supported the rebuilding of airfreight supply chains for over **\$2.4 billion** of Australian exports from all states delivered to more than **65** global markets on an estimated **6,500** flights.

Austrade is working with DFAT and the Australian Border Force to scope a Simplified Trade System, to make trading simpler, cheaper and more digital.

We continue to promote Australia as a provider and destination of choice to international students.

Australia's **tourism operators** are facing significant challenges following the devastating impact of bushfires and COVID-19. Austrade is responsible for Commonwealth tourism policy. The Government is providing whole-of-economy and sector specific support. Short term measures, such as JobKeeper, are designed to ensure the tourism industry survives. Austrade is administering several of the tourism specific grants programs, including under the **\$1 billion** COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund.

The Government's medium-term measures, such as those announced in the **2020-21 Budget**, will drive industry recovery, as borders reopen. In the long term, the Government will support the tourism industry to innovate, transform and ensure sustainable growth.

At a time of global disruption, Australia is an attractive **safe haven for foreign investment**. Foreign investment brings the know-how, technology and capital to underpin our economic recovery and create jobs. The largest investment supported by Austrade this year has been the French renewables company Neoen, which invested **\$570 million** into Australia's largest solar farm in Chinchilla, Queensland.

This has been a challenging year, and we have a hard road ahead. Austrade will continue our efforts to support **Australians and Australian business** to ensure Australia's economic recovery. Thank you.