



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Trade Sub-Committee

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 23 June 2015

Chair: Hon Bruce Scott MP
Deputy Chair: Maria Vamvakinou MP

Australia Saudi Business Council to discuss Australia's billion-dollar trade with Saudi Arabia

The Chairman of the Australia Saudi Business Council, Tom Harley, will discuss how Australia can grow its \$2.2 billion in exports to Saudi Arabia with federal parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade at a public hearing in Canberra tomorrow.

The Trade sub-committee's inquiry into trade with the Middle East will also hear how to build on the nearly \$5 billion of Saudi investment in Australia last year. Australia also invested nearly a \$1 billion into projects and businesses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2014.

Saudi Arabia is the Middle East's largest economy with a 2013 budget surplus of \$55 billion and population of over 30 million. The Kingdom, which is estimated to hold more than 20 per cent of the world's conventional oil reserves, has become Australia's second-largest trading partner in the Middle East behind the United Arab Emirates.

This oil-rich economy has helped build massive construction projects that have in turn fed increased demand for imports, services and education. The Saudi infrastructure and transportation sectors received US\$17.3 billion in their 2014 budget. Major Saudi projects include roads, railways and sea ports, as well as upgrading airports.

Saudi Arabia also remains the largest market for Australian-built motor vehicles, importing \$748 million worth of cars in 2014 – mostly Toyota Camrys.

Food security remains a key concern for Saudi Arabia, with Australia well placed to assist by exporting more than \$310 million in Australian beef and other meats to the Kingdom last year. The Australian government believes there are opportunities to increase the trade in barley and wheat to Saudi Arabia to cement Australia's place as a long-term grain supplier.

Education for its young population is another priority area with Saudi Arabia allocating US\$56 billion to education and training in 2014, including almost US\$6 billion to fund 185,000 students studying abroad. More than 10,000 Saudis are enrolled at Australian universities under the global King Abdullah Scholarships Program. Vocational education and training is also seen as a growth area.

Public hearing

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| Date/Time | Wednesday 24 June 2015, 11:10 am |
| Location | Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra |
| Organisations | Australia Saudi Business Council |

Live audio broadcast will be available at www.aph.gov.au/live

For media comment: contact the Trade sub-committee Chair, the Hon Bruce Scott MP on (02) 6277 4949 (Parliament House)

For background information: Further details about the inquiry, including the full terms of reference and how to contribute, can be obtained from the committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/jfadt or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 2313 or emailing jscfadt@aph.gov.au.