

Professor Carolyn Evans
Dean
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10 April 2017

The Hon Stuart Robert MP
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: jsct@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Robert

Inquiry into SAFTA

Melbourne Law School wishes to support the SAFTA, particularly the elements of the agreement that open up additional opportunities for Australian education providers, including in legal education.

In particular, Melbourne Law School moved from teaching an undergraduate law course (the LLB) to a graduate law course (the JD) around a decade ago. Despite the good efforts of the High Commission, the University and other stakeholders, we were unable to receive accreditation for the JD in Singapore despite the fact that the LLB has been recognised for many years. This means that students from Singapore who wished to study in Australia and return home and work as lawyers in Singapore had to obtain special permission from the Singaporean authorities to do so, whereas the LLB was recognised without going through such a process.

It is clear that the Singaporean government was only willing to recognise our degree as part of the SAFTA arrangements. Even the announcement of this agreement has led to a strong upturn in the number of students from Singapore enrolling at Melbourne Law School and making inquiries about our degree. Singaporean students tend to be highly able and successful in Australian legal education. The recognition of more Australian law degrees in the SAFTA has been welcomed by those law schools and the Council of Australian Law Deans.

For these reasons, I wish to commend the work undertaken by the Government and the High Commission in ensuring that an expansion of the opportunities for legal education providers was included in SAFTA and to highlight the importance of these provisions for law schools such as ours.

Yours sincerely,

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