

TEMPLATE FOR SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Environment and Communications Answers to questions on notice Environment and Energy portfolio

Inquiry name: Inquiry into the Framework Agreement on the Establishment of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)

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The Hon Stuart Robert MP asked: “What engagement have we had with our Department of Industry on this?...only because your last statement was you think there will be benefits for Australian industry”

Answer:

Australia’s joining of the ISA has been raised in our regular meetings with our colleagues working in the international team of the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science. While their focus is more on the resources sector, they did not raise any concerns with us joining.

The Department of the Environment and Energy has direct engagement with industry and research stakeholders in the solar and power sectors. We have undertaken informal consultations on the ISA with a number of stakeholders from the Australian Solar Council, Clean Energy Council, solar project development businesses, engineering consultancies and universities.

These stakeholders could see the benefit of joining the ISA, particularly through the aggregation of demand and increasing the ease of doing business in the region. Much of the time and cost of individual project development is spent in consultations with local residents, governments and non-government organisations to understand the local environment and regulatory processes before the technical aspects of the system are even addressed.

The harmonisation of equipment standards, testing and installation procedures, along with access to affordable finance and collaboration on research and innovation would all be factors that would facilitate Australian industry doing business in ISA Member countries.

Industry stakeholders were advised that a more formal consultation process will take place to explore maximum benefits for Australia once we have ratified the treaty. They suggested establishing a working group to coordinate the consultation and some stakeholders have volunteered to participate in this.