



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

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

MEDIA ALERT
Issued: 11 September 2008

Chair: Senator Michael Forshaw
Sub Comm. Chair: Michael Danby MP

Australia's Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN to be discussed at a public hearing

Australia's Free Trade Agreement with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) will be the major topic for discussion when Parliament's Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee conducts its first public hearing as part of its inquiry into Australia's relationship with ASEAN.

Announcing the public hearing, Sub-Committee Chairman Michael Danby said the committee is keen to be advised of details of the FTA with ASEAN when the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade appears before it in Canberra on Friday, 12 September.

"Trade Minister Simon Crean has just announced the successful completion of free trade negotiations with ASEAN, but no details of the agreement have been released," Mr Danby said. "The committee is keen to find out from Trade officials where this FTA sits in relation to those which Australia already has with other ASEAN countries such as Singapore and Thailand."

The 10 ASEAN nations are the sixth most important export destination for Australian goods and services, and Australia is the eighth most important source of imports from ASEAN. Representing a population of around 575 million, the ASEAN nations are an important trading partner for Australia, worth over \$55 billion in 2007.

Along with exploring ways to improve Australia's involvement in ASEAN and opportunities to enhance the regional economy and improve cultural links, the committee will examine the security of the region and Australian involvement.

"Political stability in the region and good international relations are integral to Australia's security and prosperity. The committee will be talking to Defence officials about its relations with ASEAN countries and how Defence's support may enhance regional security," Mr Danby said.

The public hearing in **Committee Room 1R1** Parliament House in Canberra will be webcast live on: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

9.00 am	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
9.40 am	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
10.20 am	Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
11.10 am	Department of Defence
11.50 am	Prof. Tony Miller, Basham Prof. of Asian History, ANU
1.30 pm	IP Australia
2.00 pm	Australian Academy of Science
2.30 pm	Engineers Australia
3.00 pm	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relation

The program will continue with public hearings in Melbourne on Thursday, 2 October and in Sydney on Thursday, 6 November. Submissions to the inquiry and transcripts of the public hearings are available on the Committee's website.

For media inquiries, contact the Sub-Committee Chairman, Michael Danby MP on 03 9534 8126.

For all other inquiries, contact the Sub-Committee Secretary, John Carter, on 02 6277 4306 or visit the committee website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/asean1/index.htm>