

Chapter 1

Introduction

Referral

1.1 On 24 March 2015, the Senate referred the following matter to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report:

The proposed China-Australia Free Trade Agreement, with particular reference to the impact of the agreement on Australia's:

- a. economy and trade;
- b. domestic labour market testing obligations and laws regarding wages, conditions and entitlements of Australian workers and temporary work visa holders;
- c. investment; and
- d. social, cultural and environmental policies.

That, in conducting the inquiry, the committee shall review the agreement to ensure it is in Australia's national interest, and have regard to the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties on the proposed agreement.

That the committee report within one month of the tabling of the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties on the proposed agreement.¹

1.2 The agreement was tabled in the Parliament on 17 June 2015 and was referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) for inquiry and report.² On 19 October 2015, JSCOT tabled its report into the ChAFTA. The majority report made five recommendations, including that binding treaty action be taken in relation to ChAFTA.³

Conduct of inquiry

1.3 The committee advertised the inquiry on its website and in *The Australian* newspaper. The committee also wrote to individuals and organisations likely to have an interest in the agreement, drawing their attention to the inquiry and inviting them to make written submissions.

1.4 The committee received 69 submissions to the inquiry. These submissions are listed at Appendix 1, and are available on the committee's website: www.aph.gov.au/senate_fadt. The committee also received 57 form letters from individuals expressing opposition to the agreement.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, 24 March 2015, p. 2371.

2 House of Representatives, *Votes and Proceedings*, 17 June 2015, p. 1397.

3 Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, Treaty tabled on 17 June 2015, *Report 154*, October 2015, p. 66.

Structure of the report

1.5 Chapter 2 provides background to the agreement. Chapter 3 considers some of the key trade outcomes. Chapter 4 discusses the key issues raised during the inquiry. Chapter 5 contains the committee's conclusion and recommendations.

Acknowledgements

1.6 The committee thanks all those who assisted the inquiry by providing submissions and other material.