

Chapter 1

Introduction

Referral of the bills

1.1 On 30 October 2014, the provisions of the following bills were referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 27 November 2014:

- Customs Amendment (Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014; and
- Customs Tariff Amendment (Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014.¹

1.2 The reasons for the referral of the bills cited by the Selection of Bills Committee were:

- to enable thorough scrutiny of the provisions of the legislation; and
- to supplement the inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties into the Agreement.²

1.3 As their titles indicate, the bills implement parts of a bilateral trade agreement, the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JAEPA). JAEPA was signed by the Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, and Prime Minister of Japan, Mr Shinzo Abe, on 8 July 2014 in Canberra. The treaty text together with the national interest analysis (NIA), regulation impact statement (RIS) and annexures was tabled in the Parliament on 14 July 2014.³

1.4 The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) tabled its report into JAEPA on 28 October 2014. JSCOT concluded:

The Committee is satisfied that JAEPA has the potential to provide Australian business and industry with a range of profitable opportunities. The Committee believes JAEPA will provide a net benefit to the economy and is in the National interest and recommends that the Treaty should be ratified and binding treaty action be taken.⁴

1.5 The Minister for Trade and Investment, the Hon Andrew Robb MP, introduced the bills into the House of Representatives on 29 October 2014.⁵

1 *Journals of the Senate*, 30 October 2014, p. 1691.

2 Senate Selection of Bills Committee, *Report 14 of 2014*, 30 October 2014, Appendix 4.

3 House of Representatives, *Votes and Proceedings*, 14 July 2014, p. 688.

4 Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, *Report 144, Treaty tabled on 14 July 2014, Agreement between Australia and Japan for an Economic Partnership*, October 2014, p. 32.

5 House of Representatives, *Votes and Proceedings*, 29 October 2014, p. 941.

Conduct of inquiry

1.6 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 bill, drawing their attention to the inquiry and inviting them to make written submissions.

1.7 The committee received 13 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.

Structure of report

1.8 Chapter 2 provides an overview of the bills. Chapter 3 discusses key issues raised during the inquiry and contains the committee's view and recommendation.

Acknowledgements

1.9 The committee acknowledges the short period of time available for those who made submissions. The committee thanks all those who assisted with the inquiry.