

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Tourism and Resources Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2006-2007, 1 November 2006

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND RESOURCES
TOPIC: CHINA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (FTA) NEGOTIATIONS
REFERENCE: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

QUESTION No.SI-35

Senator Carr asked:

What involvement has the Department had in preparation for, or conduct of, negotiations for the China FTA?

ANSWER

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources has actively participated in all aspects of the Australia-China FTA negotiations. The Department has participated in all negotiating rounds and prepared briefing material, draft Chapter text and information papers for the negotiations, including substantial input on the Australian and Chinese trade regimes and identifying relevant offensive and defensive interests. The Department has also prepared material and given presentations at relevant capacity building workshops for Chinese Government and industry officials conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as part of the commitment Australia made under the Australia-China Trade and Economic Framework Agreement.

The Department has been heavily involved in the China FTA stakeholder consultation process. Departmental officers have attended relevant consultation sessions in all Australian state and territory capitals. Information gathered through these sessions has been used to develop initial negotiating positions across the Department's sectoral responsibilities. Departmental officers have also reviewed all public submissions of relevance to the Department's responsibilities.

The Department has also supported some travel to China by Australian industry organisations to engage with Chinese authorities and to attend conferences directly connected with the negotiations.

QUESTION No.SI-36

Senator Carr asked:

Has the Department conducted or commissioned any research into if (or how) the current TCF/Auto tariff and industry arrangements could be altered? Has there been any policy development work undertaken in his regard?

ANSWER

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources has not conducted or commissioned dedicated research into if or how the current TCF and Automotive industry plans could be altered as part of the FTA. The Department, as part of a whole-of-government approach has conducted extensive consultations with both group and individual stakeholders who represent specific or sensitive sectoral interests (eg, automotives and TCF). Representatives of these sectors have also made detailed submissions to the Australian Government as part of the FTA process. The views of all stakeholders have been, and continue to be, integral in developing Australian Government policy positions on aspects of the FTA negotiations which impact on the responsibilities of the Department.