



Government needs to back up the Foreign Policy White Paper's talk with action MEDIA RELEASE Thursday 23 November 2017

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'The Foreign Policy White Paper says all the right things' said Export Council of Australia (ECA) CEO Lisa McAuley. 'But the value of the paper will be determined by whether they're put into action.'

'We endorse the five objectives the government announced in the White Paper. Australia's future prosperity depends on a prosperous and secure region, its citizens remaining safe, secure and free, emphatically rejecting protectionism, growing international opportunities for its businesses and an international system governed by rules.'

While the ECA, like many, would prefer international trade to be opened by comprehensive, global agreements, we agree with the government's assessment that these are unlikely, and the next best option is plurilateral, regional and bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs).

'Just sitting around in the WTO waiting for the world to magically liberalise trade is not an option. Like it or not, it's a race to open up international markets. If Australia were to sit on the sidelines, we'd lose out', said Ms McAuley.

'A regional free trade zone is a very worthy aspiration,' Ms McAuley added.

In the Foreign Policy White Paper the government commits to many of the policy settings the ECA has called for in the past, both in its White Paper submission and its annual trade policy recommendations. These include:

- rejecting protectionism and a commitment to advocate for open trade and investment, at home and abroad
- developing a cohesive national brand that positions Australia as an ideal place to visit, invest in and buy from
- influencing international standards and regulations to support Australian businesses
- a strategy to deal with non-tariff measures
- revamping its diplomatic efforts to deliver greater commercial value
- greater focus on services exports beyond education and tourism
- facilitating people-to-people connections, including through education, Aid for trade, the New Colombo Plan and better leveraging Australia's alumni and expat network.

'While these are very worthy commitments,' said Ms McAuley, 'the next step will be to define how the commitments will be implemented. To truly deliver anything, the White Paper must be backed up with time, effort and money. And to truly make an impact, these commitments must be delivered in partnership with business.'

Next month the ECA will deliver its annual trade policy recommendations. These recommendations will focus on MSMEs and how to get more Australian businesses into international markets, how to help them be competitive in international markets, and how to help them grow in international markets. 'These recommendations will help the government fill in some of the blanks in the White Paper' said Ms McAuley.

The ECA's Foreign Policy White Paper submission can be found [here](#) and its annual trade policy recommendations [here](#).

For further information please contact:

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