



## Domestic barriers to trade jeopardise gains from Free Trade Agreements

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There is no doubt that Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are good news for Australian business but unless we address domestic barriers to trade and build capability and capacity these opportunities are likely to be lost to international counterparts. It's time for Australia to look beyond FTAs and approach trade policy from a broader, whole-of-government perspective says the Export Council of Australia (ECA).

The ECA is today releasing its third annual Trade Policy Recommendations, which build on its 2013, and 2014 recommendations, as well as address issues critical to the G20 and the Government's recent inquiries into services exports and businesses' utilisation of FTAs.

Chief Executive Officer of the ECA Lisa McAuley says our recommendations are intended to benefit Australian importers and exporters of all sizes and across all industry sectors, with a particular focus on the SME sector."

"Australian companies have a world of opportunities on offer and we applaud the Government's continued efforts to break down barriers to trade although more can be done with our recommendations identifying areas where improvement can be made. What is important now is that businesses have the information and support they need to leverage these global opportunities," Ms McAuley said.

The ECA is urgently calling on Government at all levels to focus on six core issues, which, if implemented will develop the capability and capacity of companies to take advantage of the abundant international opportunities, and improve Australia's hard and soft infrastructure to better facilitate trade:

1. **Addressing Infrastructure Challenges & Improving Supply Chain Efficiencies:** Australia's infrastructure must improve to meet expectations and demand.
2. **Leverage Free Trade Agreements:** Increasing businesses' awareness and understanding of FTAs is key to delivering outcomes.
3. **Advancing Trade Development:** Investing in trade is investing to grow.
4. **Improving Trade Facilitation:** Improving the processes and regulations that govern the delivery of goods and services will facilitate more seamless trade.
5. **Growing Service Exports:** Services are one of our strengths; we need to deliver to the world.
6. **Enhancing Two-way Investment:** Investment is critical to Australia's future prosperity.

With the China-Australia FTA having now entered into force and the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement to be signed later this week, there is clearly significant momentum in the liberalisation of trade. However, there remains much work to be done on the domestic barriers to trade, which can limit the gains and benefits from FTAs.

Director of the ECA Andrew Hudson says these recommendations are focused on enhancing trade and investment outcomes, which are crucial for a strong, competitive economy that enables growth.

"Trade is vital to the Australian economy and we are keen to see more Australian businesses become outward looking, proactive in seeking opportunities abroad, and equipping themselves with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed", Mr Hudson said.

"The ECA will continue to work closely with our members, industry and government to build the capacity and capability of Australian companies and celebrate their international business success," Ms McAuley said.



# Export Council of Australia

The Voice for Australia's Exporters

We would like to thank our Trade Policy Committee and Trade Policy Advisory Committee for their contribution:

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