



# Liaison Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 5675 Email: [liaisoncommittee@parliament.uk](mailto:liaisoncommittee@parliament.uk)

Website: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/103/liaison-committee-commons>

From Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, Chair

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
By email

1 July 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

The Committee has asked me to request an extension to the period allowed to Parliament for the scrutiny of the Australia / UK trade agreement under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act. This is in support of the request made in the International Trade Committee's recent report.<sup>1</sup> I understand that you have also been copied into some correspondence on the subject.<sup>2</sup>

The extension would provide time for proper parliamentary scrutiny and for the Government to promote the benefits it believes the deal will bring. I understand that it would not delay the treaty coming into force, as it must also be ratified in Australia and this is unlikely to happen soon given the recent elections.

There has been an extensive correspondence between International Trade Committee, Department for International Trade and Leader of the House. Assurances have been given time and again that the Committee will have sufficient advance warning of upcoming developments, time, and access to relevant documents to scrutinise the agreement. We expect that those assurances will be respected.

We understand that the Secretary of State withdrew from a hearing with the Committee after 10 pm on the night before it was due to take place. Members of the Committee are concerned by the possible discourtesy shown to the International Trade Committee. At the same time, our priority is to ensure that Parliament can undertake proper scrutiny. The Committee must report during the 21 sitting day scrutiny period. The report is intended to inform the House's deliberations. That cannot happen if the Committee is unable to report until the very end of the period.

We understand the Committee will report as best it is able on the evidence it has had and the time it has been given. I appreciate that the Secretary of State may already be committed to appear in the coming week, but it appears that this will not be in time to include her answers to the Committee's questioning in their report, if it is to be released during the scrutiny period. I am sure you agree that this would be unsatisfactory. We therefore ask that the scrutiny period be extended, to allow it to work as intended and Parliament have the benefit of the Committee's considered view.

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<sup>1</sup> International Trade Committee, First Report of Session 2022–23, [UK trade negotiations: Scrutiny of Agreement with Australia](#), HC444

<sup>2</sup> International Trade Committee, 29 June 2022, [Letter to the Secretary of State](#)



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From Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, Chair

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chairs of the International Trade Committee, International Agreements Committee, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, and the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, and to the Leader of the House.

*Yours ever*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernard Jenkin", with a horizontal line underneath.

**Sir Bernard Jenkin MP**  
**Chair of the Committee**