



Department for
International Trade



Department for
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& Industrial Strategy

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The Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith QC
Chairman
International Agreements Committee
House of Lords
London
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14 December 2020

Dear Peter,

Update on negotiations on the UK's future trading relationship with Australia

I am writing to inform you and your committee that today I will be making a Written Ministerial Statement to update Parliament on the third round of negotiations towards a UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The third UK-Australia FTA negotiating round took place virtually from 23 November to 4 December.

During the two weeks, negotiators completed around 50 discussions, spanning the breadth of the FTA. Both sides continued to have detailed textual discussions, and negotiators are now in the process of consolidating texts in several chapter areas. These include digital, telecommunications, customs, rules of origin, procurement, and cross-cutting provisions such as dispute settlement. Discussions in these chapters indicated areas of common understanding where progress could be made.

We held detailed technical discussions on text in areas such as investment, professional business services and financial services, including on regulatory cooperation. Across all areas of the Free Trade Agreement negotiation, we identified areas of convergence and some areas of divergence. Both sides are regularly engaging with domestic stakeholders to ensure our respective proposals are informed by their views.

Both sides exchanged their initial goods market access offers before the round. This exchange of goods market access offers is an early milestone, and the speed at which this stage has been reached demonstrates the momentum behind these negotiations. Discussions on market access will continue in parallel with discussions across the agreement.

After this round we have agreed to a number of intersessional discussions to ensure pace is maintained heading into the next round. The next round will take place in early 2021.

Any deal the UK Government agrees will be fair and balanced and in the best interests of the whole of the UK. As we will in all negotiations, we remain committed to upholding our high environmental, labour, product and food safety, and animal welfare standards in our trade agreement with Australia, as well as protecting the National Health Service (NHS).

The Government further remains fully committed to transparency and will ensure that parliamentarians, UK citizens and businesses have access to information on our trade negotiations. We will make the next statement on progress following the fourth round of talks.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grimstone'.

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel, Kt
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