



International Trade Committee

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Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State
Department for International Trade
King Charles Street
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10 June 2021

Dear Liz,

The Committee met with your officials yesterday for the private briefing you offered ahead of the Agreement in Principle announcement expected soon for UK-Australia negotiations. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing nature of discussions ahead of this announcement, your officials did not feel able to share details of current progress or hoped-for outcomes in confidence, and so we were not able to scrutinise either the ongoing negotiations or the likely details of the Agreement in Principle. However, Vivien Life, the Chief Negotiator, offered to return to brief us on the detail as soon as Agreement in Principle is finalised.

My Committee takes very seriously its role in scrutinising any Free Trade Agreements the Government negotiates, and I know you have emphasised the importance of and your support for that scrutiny. Part of this role is to ensure that the information the Government provides helps to inform the scrutiny of the Agreements.

I am grateful for the private briefings we have received, and understand these may need to continue these during live negotiations to avoid prejudicing them. I am content with this so long as they do provide the Committee with clear information and answers to scrutiny in confidence. However, I am also firmly of the view that, wherever possible, we should have discussions in the public domain, to inform the wider debate around Agreements. Consequently, I am inviting you and Vivien to a public evidence session, within a week of the UK-Australia Agreement in Principle announcement, to ensure the transparency of our engagement and scrutiny, in a timely way that helps dispel any misunderstandings of the text and commitments.

I would be grateful if your officials could engage with the Committee Clerk to ensure this session can be arranged promptly.

In accordance with our usual practice, this letter, along with your reply, will be published on the Committee's webpage.

Yours sincerely,

Angus Brendan MacNeil
Chair of the International Trade Committee