



Department for International Trade

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Dear Neil,

Thank you for your letter of 26 May on the prospective UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement and the new Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC).

The Government has been clear that any deal with Australia must work for UK consumers, producers and companies. The deal we sign with Australia will include protections for the agriculture industry and will not undercut UK farmers or compromise our high standards. Tariffs for sensitive goods will be staged over time, with bilateral safeguards built in.

In your letter you have raised the issue of Parliamentary scrutiny of FTAs.

Now that Agreement in Principle (AIP) has been secured and all chapters of the agreement have been closed, the text of the agreement will undergo an extensive process over several months to prepare it for signature and subsequent publication. This includes the process of legal scrub, preparing the independently scrutinised impact assessment and other briefing documents.

I updated the House when we reached AIP and laid out the next steps for scrutiny of the agreement. As part of this we will continue to work with the International Trade Committee and International Agreements Committee to support their reporting on the final agreement.

You asked about the report from the Trade and Agriculture Commission. The 22 recommendations in the TAC's report each require detailed consideration. As I said in my previous letter I look to be in a position to publish the Government's response to the TAC report shortly.

You also asked about the establishment of the new TAC. The new TAC will act as an independent body helping to scrutinise new free trade agreements.

When an FTA has been agreed and signed, it will then be considered by parliament. At this stage, the TAC will advise on whether, or to what extent, the measures in the FTA are consistent with the maintenance of UK levels of statutory protection in relation to:

- animal and plant health standards;
- animal welfare standards; and,
- environmental standards as they relate to agricultural products.

The Department has now issued a call for expressions of interest for membership of the new body and announcements on the Chair and the membership will follow once the EOI process has concluded.

You also raised concerns about the timing of the establishment of the TAC in relation to the Australian FTA. I would like to offer reassurance on this point. The TAC's role is not to inform or comment on negotiations, but to scrutinise treaty text after signature, and will be set up in advance of signing the Australia FTA.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Chair of the International Trade Committee, as per your letter.

Best wishes,



THE RT HON ELIZABETH TRUSS MP
Secretary of State for International Trade
& President of the Board of Trade