



# International Trade Committee

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Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP  
Secretary of State for International Trade  
Department for International Trade  
Old Admiralty Building  
Admiralty Place  
London  
SW1A 2BL

21 January 2022

Dear Anne-Marie,

Thank you for your letter of 11 January regarding parliamentary scrutiny of the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA).<sup>1</sup>

I am grateful for your confirmation that my committee will have “sufficient time” to consider the Trade and Agriculture Commission’s (TAC’s) advice, reflecting Minister Mordaunt’s previous assurance.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, I note with concern your statement that you:

do not envisage there being a significant period of time between the publication of the report under section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020 and the triggering of the [Constitutional Reform and Governance Act’s (CRaG) 21 sitting-day scrutiny] period.<sup>3</sup>

In reply to my questions about when the TAC’s advice and the ‘section 42’ report will be published,<sup>4</sup> you noted that it is not currently possible to confirm the dates. However, I gather from indications given by your officials that, while the TAC’s advice will be shared with my committee in confidence soon after it is submitted to the Government, it will only be made public alongside your section 42 report.

Given the above, there is a serious risk that my committee will not be able to take informed public evidence on the TAC’s advice or the section 42 report until the CRaG period has begun. This, in turn, would mean that the committee could not hold its final evidence session, to take evidence from you, or complete its report, until well into the CRaG period.

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<sup>1</sup> [Correspondence from the Secretary of State regarding parliamentary scrutiny of the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement, dated 11 January 2022](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Correspondence from the DIT Minister for Trade Policy regarding UK trade negotiations oral evidence follow-up, dated 3 December 2021](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Correspondence from the Secretary of State regarding parliamentary scrutiny of the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement, dated 11 January 2022](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Correspondence from the Chair to the Secretary of State regarding the timeline for scrutiny, dated 16 December 2021](#)

Inevitably, this would leave little time for other Members of Parliament to consider our report ahead of any debate that it might call for on the Australia FTA, in which the House might vote on a motion objecting to ratification.

Failure to allow my committee sufficient time to publish its report before the CRaG process starts would clearly be at odds with your assertion to Mr Speaker that the Government wishes “to ensure that there is sufficient time for the relevant Select Committees to produce reports, should they wish, ahead of CRaG”.<sup>5</sup> As you noted in that letter, the Government has also previously given similar commitments to my committee and others.<sup>6</sup>

I can assure you that it will not be possible for my committee to produce its report ahead of CRaG unless it is triggered at least 15 sitting days after publication of the TAC’s advice and the section 42 report.

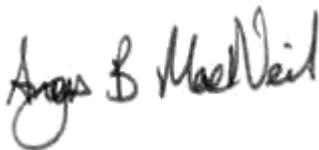
Consequently, please can you confirm whether you will allow my committee, and other committees, the time needed (as set out above) to consider, take evidence and report on the FTA and its potential implications – including in relation to the TAC’s advice and the section 42 report – before the CRaG period is triggered.

Please can you also confirm that likely dates for the publication of the TAC’s advice and the section 42 report will be shared with my committee as soon as they are identified.

As your response to this letter could have serious implications for the quality of the scrutiny my committee will be able to undertake, I would appreciate a response within two weeks. I am copying this letter to the Chairs of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the International Agreements Committee, given their related interest.

In accordance with our usual practice, this letter, along with any replies, will be published on the Committee’s webpage.

Kind regards,



Angus Brendan MacNeil  
Chair of the International Trade Committee

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<sup>5</sup> [Correspondence from the Secretary of State to Mr Speaker outlining the Government’s approach to presenting the UK–Australia Free Trade Agreement to Parliament, dated 3 December 2021](#)

<sup>6</sup> Secretary of State’s evidence to International Trade Committee, 24 June 2020, [Q47](#); [Correspondence from the Secretary of State to the Chair on the scrutiny of free trade agreements, date 30 June 2020](#); Minister of State for Trade Policy during Trade Bill Report Stage, HC Deb, 20 July 2020, [col 1892](#); [Correspondence from the Secretary of State to the Chair regarding transparency and scrutiny of Free Trade Agreements, dated 16 March 2021](#)