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Submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Indonesia-Australia FTA Feasibility Study.

A Free Trade Agreement that results in greater communication and cultural and social exchange between Indonesia and Australia is to be welcomed. I would personally look forward in particular to the opportunity to have many of the great varieties of fruit grown in Indonesia made readily available to Australian consumers.

Although there are market access issues on all levels, as someone involved in education I can only comment on the experiences of those who work in my sector. Given Australia's role as a service-based economy, it is particularly important that educational and training services receive prominent attention in any FTA. In my experience, one of the greatest hindrances to free exchange in education comes through immigration requirements, and the interpretation and implementation of these by immigration officers in both countries. Colleagues from Indonesia have from time-to-time experienced difficulties acquiring visas to Australia, and in some cases have been exposed to ill-mannered treatment by our immigration officers in Jakarta. In some of these cases they have had to pay multiple visa application fees. On arrival in Australia, I know of many Indonesians who have been singled out for extra interrogation and other treatment that has reflected badly on our country. It seems there are major issues in the culture of the relevant department to be addressed.

On the Indonesian side, it is quite a difficult and lengthy process to obtain visas for research, study and teaching. The rules attached to KITAS visas, the long-term visa, make movement around Indonesia and outside the country cumbersome, and the processes of visa application often require the intervention to visa consultants or of people in influential positions. People who have worked as English teachers in private institutions have reported great difficulty in getting the correct visas, partly because of a bureaucratic category issue by which teaching English does not enable people to get work visas. If these and other processes could be simplified and streamlined, both our countries would benefit, particularly because the standard of English-language education in Indonesia is generally very poor.

I would be happy to elaborate on these issues or add other materials if you desire. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Adrian Vickers

