

23 October 2020

Australia-UK FTA Coordinator
Regional Trade Agreements Division
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
RG Casey Building, John McEwen Crescent
BARTON ACT 0221

VIA EMAIL: ukfta@dfat.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

Bathurst Regional Council would like to officially register our support for the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement.

Bathurst is a major regional centre within NSW and is the largest LGA in the Central West. Bathurst's Estimated Resident Population (ERP) as of June 2019 was 43,618 with Bathurst projected to reach a population of 50,000 people by the year 2041 (2019 NSW Population Projections).

The Bathurst Region has a diverse economy, with strength in manufacturing, healthcare services, education and NSW public administration. With a Gross Regional Product of \$2.27 billion and average population growth of 1.2% per annum, the Bathurst Region has consistently ranked amongst the highest regional growth areas of NSW (NSW Department of Planning and Environment 2016 and 2019 projections).

The Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement presents a significant opportunity for Bathurst to capitalise on our existing sister city relationship with Cirencester, a market town in Gloucestershire County, 130 km's west of London. The Australia-UK FTA could facilitate business-to-business relationships and pave the way for Bathurst to participate in proposed Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in the areas of cybersecurity, technology, agriculture, environmental science, and advanced manufacturing. There are many commonalities between the Bathurst and Cirencester economies, with education, health, manufacturing, and retail ranking amongst the largest employment industries. The county is home to many educational institutions including Hartpury University and the University of Gloucestershire. Charles Sturt University, a leading regional university, is headquartered in Bathurst and is currently in discussions with Hartpury University to establish joint qualifications and areas of study.

The tourism industry is another strong commonality between Cirencester and Bathurst. Cirencester, which is nestled within the famous Cotswolds district of Gloucestershire, is a tourist mecca in the UK. The Bathurst Region attracts 955,000 tourists on average per year and shares a rich history as Australia's oldest inland European settlement. The FTA is a great opportunity to strengthen tourism ties and to share the historical linkages more broadly between Bathurst and

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Cirencester (with Bathurst named in 1815 for the 3rd Earl Bathurst whose ancestral home is at Cirencester).

Bathurst is an emerging Smart Community of national significance and has been recognised by the NSW Government as an Emerging Innovation Centre (NSW Innovation and Productivity Council "NSW Innovation Precincts: Lessons from International experience" report). Bathurst's endeavours as a Smart City would be enhanced through a Free Trade Agreement as Cirencester is working towards their own Smart City Strategy. The FTA would enhance cooperation and pave the way for more open sharing of research and technologies. Council has a 10,000sqm block of land which is strategically located adjacent to the Charles Sturt University campus and between TAFE NSW and NSW Spatial Services which has been zoned for a technology park. The establishment of a Free Trade Agreement may facilitate the development of a larger technology precinct in Bathurst, with cooperation on the attraction of UK based technology firms who may wish to have a presence in regional Australia. The FTA may also complement the work of NSW Spatial Services and the new Cyber Security Vulnerability Management Centre which was recently launched in Bathurst as greater cooperation and information sharing would be encouraged.

The emerging Bathurst entrepreneurial ecosystem which is led by the Bathurst Upstairs Start-up Hub could benefit immensely from the opportunities that the FTA could provide. The Hub and entrepreneurs within both localities would benefit in terms of enhanced mentorship, connections, and expansion to include a possible international start-up cluster.

The FTA could also enhance opportunities around the export of food products manufactured in Bathurst. Bathurst is home to three major food manufacturing plants (Simplot, Devro and Mars Petcare), the exports of which could be more greatly facilitated with the UK through the FTA. Bathurst has a strong agricultural sector (7th largest industry in terms of GRP contribution) specialising in sheep (meat and wool) and cattle farming and vegetable production (corn, cauliflower, cabbage and broccoli). Bathurst's agricultural export market could be greatly enhanced through the development of new export markets in the UK.

Should the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade require further details of this submission, please contact Neil Southorn at neil.southorn@bathurst.nsw.gov.au or (02) 6333 6219.

Yours faithfully



D J Sherley
GENERAL MANAGER