
March 13, 2013

Services Trade and Negotiations Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
R.G. Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
Barton ACT 0221

Sent by Email to: services.negotiations@dfat.gov.au

Re: Plurilateral services agreement negotiations in Geneva:

The Australian Services Roundtable (ASR) is the peak industry association representing the services sector in Australia. Our members comprise industry and professional associations, along with global and local firms in the professional, financial, legal, architectural, information technology, tourism, education and engineering sub-sectors. For further information see our website www.servicesaustralia.org.au

ASR writes this letter directly on behalf of its members and indirectly on behalf of the entire local services sector in strong support of the need for Australia to play a leadership role in the upcoming negotiations regarding the development of a plurilateral services agreement in Geneva.

ASR believes that this process provides a highly significant opportunity for the Australian services sector to take advantage of an ever-increasing global market place for provision of high-value services. Services now play an increasingly dominant role in economic growth and development. The services sector contributes on average as much as 70% of global GDP - and the new WTO/OECD Trade in Value-Added data now shows the share of services exports at nearly half of total world exports.

In fact ASR considers the upcoming Geneva services plurilateral negotiations to be so significant that it is funding direct attendance by its Chief Executive Officer as part of a global industry trade mission that is advocating for rapid progress in this area.

In support of the business case, ASR reinforces the fact that ABS data reflects that services represent around 80 per cent of the Australian economy by GVA and 85 per cent of employment, including 93 per cent of graduates. Over the past decade, employment in services has grown by 2.3 million jobs compared with negative growth in manufacturing and agricultural jobs and minor growth in resources jobs

Services are also the global economy's largest sector and the largest employer. The development of information and communications technology has reduced the cost of

exporting services. And the pent-up demand for services of all types can be a principal driver of growth worldwide, for decades to come. Lack of public understanding in Australia, in Asia and worldwide has meant in the last decade that global services trade reform has languished. This is why ASR believes that a widely based services plurilateral agreement is so important for the nation's future.

ASR intends to provide a more detailed submission subsequent to its attendance at the Geneva meetings (by close of business on March 28th, 2013 at the latest) regarding its input on key priorities and objectives for the negotiations.

ASR strongly urges the Australian Government to provide deep and well-resourced contributions to the services plurilateral process and encourages a strong related two-way communications process with local industry, which ASR would be happy to play a partnership role in coordinating.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J-B-1'.

Mr James Bond
President
ASR

Please reply by email to: ceo@servicesaustralia.org.au