Australian Government

Australia-United Arab Emirates
Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

First Nations Action Plan

AUSTRALIA

The Australian Government acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge that First Nations people are Australia's first traders – from trading goods with Makassan seafarers from Indonesia for generations, to now exporting a range of services and goods, including bushfoods and botanicals, art and design, cyber and clean energy solutions, to world markets. First Nations tourism businesses also highlight Australia's unique visitor experience and celebrate the world's oldest living continuous culture, both domestically and internationally.

We recognise the unique and important contribution that First Nations businesses have made, and continue to make, to strengthening our economic ties with the United Arab Emirates.

< Kehaan Lange McGuire, Artist

Artwork

Moortung. @Kehaan Lange McGuire, 2025. Used under licence.

Kehaan Lange McGuire is an Aboriginal artist and musician from Noongar Wardandi Country in the South West of Western Australia. He is the owner of Djiti Djiti Designs, where he creates, sells, and commissions Aboriginal artwork, as well as playing and performing the didgeridoo.

Kehaan developed a passion for painting and artistic expression from a young age. He was taught to play the didgeridoo by his Pop and other family members at the age of ten and has been playing and performing ever since. His painting skills come from within, shaped by his deep connection to culture and Country. Both his artwork and music reflect his heritage and the stories of his people.

For the past three years, Kehaan has been living in the United Arab Emirates, working as a freelance Aboriginal artist and musician. During this time, he has travelled throughout the Middle East, including Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Jordan, collaborating with Australian embassies to promote and celebrate Australia s Indigenous culture on an international stage.

Deeply passionate about his heritage, Kehaan uses both his art and music to stay connected to his culture, even while living abroad. Through his creative practice, he seeks to educate, inspire, and foster greater understanding of Aboriginal culture around the world, bridging communities through storytelling, sound, and design.

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Acknowledgments

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade thanks members of the pilot First Nations Trade and Investment Advisory Group for their guidance and support in developing this Australia UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) First Nations Action Plan (Action Plan). We acknowledge their expertise and leadership, and for sharing their stories with us.

We also thank the many First Nations businesses who took the time to share their perspectives with us during the CEPA negotiations. These important contributions helped shape Australia s negotiating position, resulting in the historic outcome of a standalone Indigenous chapter   the first in an Australian free trade agreement.

We also acknowledge the many Commonwealth agencies who are supporting this Action Plan, including Austrade, Export Finance Australia, IP Australia, Department of Industry, Science and Resources, Office for the Arts (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts), Department of Defence, and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

Finally, we acknowledge the various organisations across Australia that support First Nations businesses pursue international trade activity. These include State and Territory Government agencies, First Nations Business Networks, Registries and Chambers, Entrepreneur Hubs and other organisations.

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Our First Nations people are Australia's trading pioneers, forging early trading routes with our Southeast Asian and Pacific neighbours. Makassan seafarers from Sulawesi, Indonesia, traded with Indigenous communities in Northern Australia for hundreds of years.

These unique trading relationships endure today.

Underpinned by one of the world's oldest continuing cultures, First Nations businesses continue to elevate Australia's identity on the world stage. Their unique and diverse business offerings, combining innovation and design with traditional knowledge, give them an edge at home and overseas.

The Australian Government is working harder than ever to support these businesses to forge new trading routes overseas and celebrating the businesses who are already on the international stage.

The Australia-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), now in force, strengthens our relationship with the UAE, providing a platform for growth in critical sectors of our economy. It will eliminate tariffs on over 99 per cent of Australia's exports to the UAE, one of the most liberalising trade agreement the UAE has signed to date.

The Indigenous Peoples Trade and Investment Economic Cooperation chapter in CEPA, the first of its kind in any Australian free trade agreement, is a major achievement. It demonstrates our commitment to ensuring the benefits of international trade and investment are better shared across the Australian community, including with our First Nations businesses and their communities, supporting their economic empowerment.

This Action Plan is an important step in supporting Australia's First Nations business sector to realise the benefits of Australia-UAE CEPA, and the enormous potential of the United Arab Emirates market and broader region.

I thank the pilot First Nations Trade and Investment Advisory Group for their leadership and expertise in guiding the development of this document. Their understanding, perspective and insights were invaluable and I look forward to continuing to work together to see first nations businesses grow and succeed on the international stage.

Foreword: Ambassador for First Nations People, Mr Justin Mohamed

As Australia's inaugural Ambassador for First Nations People, I have been privileged to witness, and share in, the growing success of our First Nations business sector. This success is grounded in over 60,000 years of connection to Culture and Country, enhancing Australia's reputation as trading partner that values trust, respect and reciprocity.

First Nations business success is growing in every sector. These businesses are often weaving traditional knowledge and practices with innovation and advancement. Like the Northern Australian communities trading with seafarers in times gone by, First Nations businesses continue to pursue exciting trading pathways in new markets across the globe.

Historically, First Nations businesses faced many barriers to export. Those that have found international success have done so through hard work, creativity and resilience.

More is being done by the Australian Government to support our First Nations businesses succeed overseas. Work continues to embed the First Nations priorities across Australia's trade and investment architecture. This is integral to our broader First Nations approach to foreign policy. Alongside other First Nations leaders, I am elevating the diverse voices of our First Nations business sector internationally at different trade engagements, and through different bilateral and multilateral fora. Slowly, these voices are re-shaping Australia's trade policy and re-defining our international identity.

The achievement of the historic Indigenous Peoples Trade and Investment Economic Cooperation chapter in the Australia-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement is testament to this effort. It is an important moment in time for Indigenous economic empowerment and recognition of the invaluable contribution that First Nations people make to our international relationships.

This Action Plan is also the first of its kind. I am proud of the hard work and collaboration to bring it to fruition and thank the many First Nations voices from across the country that supported the negotiation of the agreement. I also thank the pilot First Nations Trade and Investment Advisory Group for their wisdom and support in developing this document, and the important role they play in steering our broader First Nations Trade and Investment agenda.

I look forward to continuing to share in the success of First Nations businesses as they launch into this exciting market.

Executive Summary

Australian First Nations businesses are poised to benefit from the enormous potential of the Australia-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

This opportunity is enabled by Australia's inaugural Indigenous chapter in a free trade agreement, CEPA's Chapter 17, Indigenous Trade and Investment Economic Cooperation.

This chapter promotes joint cooperation activities as the foundation for First Nations businesses to launch into the UAE and broader region. The agreement elevates First Nations perspectives across environment, sustainable agriculture, intellectual property protection and investment.

First Nations voices were integral in this success and continue to guide CEPA's implementation. At the inaugural meeting of the pilot First Nations Trade and Investment Advisory Group (pilot Advisory Group) on 12 February 2025, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) committed to developing a UAE CEPA First Nations Action Plan (the Action Plan).

This Action Plan, a result of the pilot Advisory Group's ongoing guidance and expertise, outlines tangible support for First Nations businesses to realise the significant economic potential of the UAE and the broader region. It is an important document, pioneering new ways of supporting First Nations business to share in the success of Australia's free trade agreements.

The Action Plan will prioritise activities across a range of diverse sectors: **Creative Industries**, **Green Economy, Services**, **Agrifood and Critical Enabling Technologies**. These sectors were identified by the pilot Advisory Group and informed by current market opportunities.

The Action Plan prioritises activities in five key pillars:

1. **Supporting First Nations businesses realise their UAE export potential** through an Advanced First Nations Export Program, online First Nations market seminar series and providing dedicated resources for First Nations exporters to the UA.
2. **Strengthening the relationship between** First Nations **businesses and the UAE** through the establishment of an Australian First Nations – UAE Business Exchange Program and First Nations Trade and Investment CEO Network.
3. **Showcasing Australia's First Nations business excellence in the UAE** through the Australian First Nations Capability Booklet for the UAE and by elevating First Nations businesses at events in the UAE and in Australia.
4. **Supporting the protection of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property** by providing potential First Nations exporters with dedicated intellectual property resources for their export journey.
5. **Elevating First Nations interests and perspectives in the Australia-UAE investment relationship** through greater First Nations representation on inbound and outbound investment missions and events.

Pilot First Nations Trade and Investment Advisory Group (FNTIAG), Brisbane meeting, June 2025.

Top line from left : Brenton Garlick (DFAT), Delvene Cockatoo-Collins (TIQ Board Member), Bevan Mailman, Michelle Deshong, Alicia McAllister (DFAT), Michael Dickerson, Milo Line (DFAT)

Middle line from left: Jenny Wardrop, Leah Armstrong, Sharon Brindley, Melanie Harris (Austrade), Savannah Finn (DFAT)

Bottom line from left: Ambassador for First Nations People Justin Mohamed, Aunty Kathy Fisher, George Mina (DFAT).

FNTIAG members Brian Bero, Cameron Costello, Shannon McGuire, Leslie Delaforce and Joshua Gilbert absent from photo.

Elevating First Nations perspectives and interests across Australia's trade and investment agenda

The Australian Government is committed to an international trade and investment agenda that drives economic growth for all Australians, including First Nations people and communities.

Greater participation in Australia's trade and investment activities can deliver economic growth and prosperity for First Nation businesses and their communities. In 2022-23, First Nations goods exporters generated almost $18 million in exports, with $670 million in total turnover and employing 2,300 workers, which is 7.5 times more than non-exporting First Nations businesses.

First Nations businesses are role models and multipliers – they train and employ more Indigenous staff than non-Indigenous businesses and channel profits back into their communities. A recent report by Supply Nation, The Sleeping Giant Rises, provides evidence that Indigenous businesses created $42.6 billion of social value each year for Indigenous business owners, their employees, their households and Community.

Greater First Nations participation in Australia's foreign investment activities, particularly the transition to net zero, promises to be transformative, supporting intergenerational wealth creation for First Nations people. Early and effective engagement by foreign investors with First Nations communities is pivotal to achieving sustainable, equitable, and culturally appropriate outcomes.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the department) is working across Australia's bilateral and multilateral relationships to embed First Nations interests and perspectives in the international agenda.

We are embedding First Nations priorities into discussions at a range of international institutions, including at the World Trade Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization, and through Australia's two Indigenous representatives on the Indigenous Peoples Economic and Trade Cooperation Arrangement.

Securing outcomes that support economic empowerment of Indigenous peoples within free trade agreements is a key priority within this agenda. Historically, Australia's free trade agreements have focused on articles that maintain the Australian Government's right to regulate key social policy and issues affecting First Nations Australians, such as ensuring the Indigenous Procurement Policy continues to benefit Indigenous-owned businesses.

The Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement (2023) went one step further, by including commitments that First Nations artists receive royalties when their artworks are resold in the UK.

CEPA is historic, elevating First Nations interests across various provisions in the agreement. It contains Australia's first-ever standalone chapter in a free trade agreement dedicated to Indigenous trade and investment cooperation.

Embedding First Nations priorities across trade and investment aligns with the Australian Government's commitment to strengthen economic outcomes that are driven by First Nations people, through initiatives such as the First Nations Economic Partnership.

These initiatives are aligned with Priority Reforms of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which will work in partnership, and transform mainstream systems, to achieve better outcomes for First Nations people.

Pilot First Nations Trade and Investment Advisory Group

First Nations voices have been central to this work. In late 2024, the Australian Goverment established the pilot Advisory Group. The pilot Advisory Group, comprising different First Nations sectoral representatives from across Australia, provides advice to Government on how First Nations businesses and communities can more equally benefit from Australia's trade and investment activities.

The establishment of the pilot Advisory Group expands the department's existing engagement with Australia's First Nations business sector.

National Statement on First Nations Trade and Investment

On 13 August, the Ministerial Council on Trade and Investment endorsed National Statement on First Nations Trade and Investment (the Statement), which is a commitment to work across the Commonwealth and all states and territories to empower First Nations business to succeed through international trade and investment. An historic achievement, the Statement captures programs and activities that states and territories are undertaking to support First Nations exporters achieve international success.

The Australia-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

In less than three decades, the UAE has been transformed from a largely desert landscape to the home of sophisticated urban spaces, a fast-growing population and a dynamic economy.

The UAE is the Middle East's third largest economy, and one of the wealthiest countries in the region on a per capita basis. Its real GDP stands at US$485 billion. The UAE has six per cent of the world's oil reserves and the seventh largest proven natural gas reserves. Petroleum exports were US$94.7 billion in 2023. In the medium term, oil and gas (which account for over two-thirds of exports and the bulk of government revenue) will continue to underpin the UAE's economy. However, significant steps towards economic diversification have already been taken, with approximately 75 per cent of GDP now generated by sectors other than oil and gas.

Driven by its strategic vision "We the UAE 2031", the UAE has continued to raise standards of living and attract talent, investing in economic transformation and diversification, world-class infrastructure and digitalisation. UAE is a leading global business hub and a global financial powerhouse, with its Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs) and international financial centres funding projects throughout the world.

This transformation is remarkable.

Australian businesses are poised to benefit from this transformation. The United Arab Emirates is Australia's largest trade and investment partner in the Middle East and is a gateway into the region for Australian exporters and service suppliers. In 2024, total trade between UAE and Australia was $12.3 billion growing 21.9 percent over the previous year, making the UAE our 18th largest overall trade partner in total goods and services trade.

Total goods trade was $7.7 billion in 2024. Australian goods exported totalled $5.5 billion with our top export of aluminium oxide worth $1.6 billion. Total services trade was $4.5 billion in 2024 with Australian services exports totalling $809 million.

Two-way investment stock was $23.7 billion in 2024 - $14.7 billion in investment from UAE to Australia, and $9.0 billion in investment from Australia to the UAE.

Key Australian exports to the UAE include alumina, meat, oil seeds, and higher education. The two countries enjoy defence, aviation, security and law enforcement cooperation, the latter underpinned by agreements on mutual legal assistance in criminal law matters and extradition.

CEPA is Australia's first free trade agreement in the Middle East region, delivering on the Government's commitment to open new opportunities for Australian businesses through trade diversification. It opens a gateway into a key distribution hub for Australian goods, in a dynamic and growing region.

CEPA eliminates tariffs on over 99 per cent of Australia's exports to the UAE by value, with most tariffs eliminated on entry-into-force or locked in at zero and others eliminated over three or five stages. This makes CEPA one of the most liberalising FTAs that the UAE has agreed to date.

Australia has also achieved other modern, flexible and trade-facilitating outcomes on rules of origin, complemented by inclusion of commitments for customs procedures. The CEPA includes mechanisms to address Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) which might otherwise impede trade. Modern provisions on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) will ensure a cross-border regulatory environment which facilitates the flow of goods.

CEPA entered into force on 1 October 2025.

Elevating Indigenous Trade and Economic Cooperation through CEPA

Removal of the UAE's import tariffs through CEPA will create commercially significant benefits for Australian First Nations exporters. This opens opportunities for First Nations businesses to diversify into this significant Middle Eastern market and provides greater certainty on the tariff treatment they will receive.

Australian exporters will benefit from the preferential market across the board. The Agreement eliminates tariffs on over 99 per cent of Australia's exports to the UAE by value, with most tariffs eliminated on entry-into-force (1 October 2025) or locked in at zero. The Agreement offers Australia a competitive advantage in areas such as bush foods, botanicals, art and fashion, which may be of particular interest to First Nations exporters.

CEPA's Chapter 17, *Indigenous Trade and Investment Economic Cooperation*, recognises the important and unique contribution that First Nations people and businesses make to international trade and investment, and the importance of empowering First Nations people to benefit from these opportunities.

The chapter acknowledges the invaluable contribution that First Nations people make to Australia's ongoing bilateral relationship with the UAE, and the potential for stronger cultural and economic ties. It also provides an opportunity for UAE companies and investors to benefit from unique and diverse First Nations business offerings. From green economy to sustainable agricultural practices, Australia's First Nations businesses are contributing their expertise, often underpinned by traditional knowledge, to help address some of our biggest challenges.

Chapter 17 delivers a framework for cooperation activities and information exchanges to occur through relevant joint trade and investment promotion activities for Indigenous businesses. It identifies priority areas of cooperation, including the environment and the transition to net zero, sustainable agriculture, investment and intellectual property protection.

Chapter 17 recognises several major international instruments and their importance to First Nations people. Both parties recognise the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), a priority for the pilot Advisory Group. Chapter 17 further recognises the *United Nations Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, noting the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals for First Nations people, organisations and businesses.

Respecting, preserving and promoting First Nations peoples' Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property is also a priority within CEPA. The Agreement recognises the importance of current initiatives, efforts and work on traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

First Nations priorities are integrated across other Articles of CEPA, including in Chapter 7, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, Chapter 11, Investment Facilitation, Chapter 12, Digital Inclusion, and across five Investment MOUs, which include modern provisions on engaging with Australia's First Nations people.

The Agreement further includes a dedicated chapter covering trade, gender balance and women's economic empowerment (Chapter 19), elevating the work of First Nations female entrepreneurs. Through Chapter 16, CEPA also includes a framework for supporting Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in securing benefits from the agreement.

The Agreement preserves Australia's existing government procurement exceptions, including the Indigenous Procurement Policy.

CEPA First Nations Action Plan

This Action Plan outlines tangible support for First Nations businesses to realise the significant economic potential of the UAE and the broader region. With the pilot Advisory Group's ongoing guidance and expertise, this document will support First Nations business to pioneer new ways of sharing in the success of Australia's free trade agreements.

The Action Plan was developed following consultation with the pilot Advisory Group and informed by current market information and opportunities with the goal of supporting and encouraging First Nations businesses realise the significant economic potential of the UAE and broader region.

The pilot Advisory Group's aspirations for this Action Plan are that it will:

- enhance the First Nations business sector's long-term capability to export into the UAE
- develop genuine and sustainable relationships between the UAE and Australia's First Nations business sector
- ensure the ongoing protection of First Nations peoples Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property
- promote and celebrate the diverse culture and stories of First Nations Australia, and First Nations business excellence, in the UAE
- maximise the outcomes for First Nations communities and their businesses through investment into, and from, the UAE, including building a greater UAE understanding of engaging First Nations people across Australia.

The Action Plan addresses these aspirations through priority sectors of Creative Industries, Green Economy, Services, Agrifood and Critical Enabling Technologies across five pillars of activity.

1 PILLAR ONE: Supporting First Nation businesses to realise their export potential

Pillar One will enhance the First Nations business sector's long-term capability to export goods and services into the UAE.

First Nations businesses have emphasised the need for greater support to build their capacity and capability to export – and shared that they often go it alone. They identify a need to improve access to market information and trade opportunities, build First Nations business capability to better engage with overseas companies and investors, as well as the need for better access to capital to support export activities.

Supporting First Nations businesses access to overseas markets has an important impact on their communities. First Nations businesses employ more First Nations people and use more First Nations companies in their supply chains.

A First Nations UAE Advanced Export Program will provide wrap-around support for up to 20 export-ready First Nations companies across priority sectors to take the next steps to export into the UAE. Businesses will be supported to develop a market export strategy and be provided with appropriate referrals to agencies including Export Finance Australia.

Online First Nations UAE market seminars will be delivered for export-curious businesses interested in learning more about the UAE market, with a focus on the Action Plan's key priority sectors. The market seminars will provide the First Nation business sector with the opportunity to learn more about the UAE market and highlight the benefits of CEPA.

Through the planned national Australia-UAE CEPA roadshow program in capital cities and key regional locations, First Nations businesses will also learn more about the benefits of CEPA, and what the Agreement means for their business.

The Australian Government has established a dedicated First Nations UAE Trade and Investment webpage to support the First Nations businesses interested in exporting to the UAE. The website features:

- information on the UAE market, including links to Austrade's Go Global Toolkit and Go Global Export Academy
- information on intellectual property (IP) protection for exporting First Nations businesses, as well as more information on artist resale royalty rights
- information on domestic programs to support First Nations businesses, including AusIndustry, business.gov.au and the Industry Growth Program
- appropriate government referral pathways for businesses seeking assistance exporting to the UAE.

Current UAE trade and investment opportunities will continue to be shared through the department's First Nations Trade and Investment Bulletin.

Blak Brews
KINTO
Blak Brews TEA
KAKADU SUNSET
MINTY GREEN
DESERT SUNRISE
LEMON MYRTLE
RED CENTRE

2 PILLAR TWO: Strengthening ties between First Nations businesses and the United Arab Emirates

The relationship between First Nations businesses in Australia and the UAE will be bolstered through activities that foster stronger cultural and business ties.

Focused on both trade and investment, this will include encouraging greater First Nations representation on missions, visits and events in the UAE, as well as fostering stronger relationships between UAE investors and companies and First Nations businesses in Australia. An Australian First Nations -UAE Business Exchange program will also encourage greater First Nations business engagement with inward trade missions, and with visiting trade and investment delegations from the UAE.

The activities will deepen two-way business literacy, supporting commercial outcomes across all priority sectors – Creative Industries, Green Economy, Services, Agrifood and Critical Enabling Technologies.

The Australian Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the Australian Consulate-General in Dubai will support First Nations businesses by connecting them with UAE business chambers, business councils, UAE government officials and distributors.

This includes encouraging increased First Nations business representation at regional trade shows and events in the UAE and broader Gulf region to assist businesses enter the market.

Key industry events in the Middle East Region (2025-26)

Event	Sector	Type of event	Opportunity	Timing
Gulfood	**Agrifood**	**Trade Show**	**All**	**January 2026**
WHX (Arab Health)	**Critical Enabling Technologies**	**Trade Show**	**Health**	**January 2026**
Gulf Information Security Expo Dubai	**Cybersecurity**	**Trade Show**	**All**	**May 2026**
Saudi Food Show	**Agrifood**	**Trade Show**	**All**	**May 2026**

A First Nations Trade and Investment CEO and Director Network will be established to build and strengthen cultural and business relationships between First Nations business leaders and their UAE counterparts. The Network will provide an opportunity to increase awareness of First Nations business offerings in the UAE, and support awareness raising of the UAE market throughout the Australian First Nations business sector. The Network will consist of CEOs from across a variety of sectors, as well as other First Nations representative bodies.

PILLAR THREE: Showcasing Australia's First Nations business excellence in the UAE

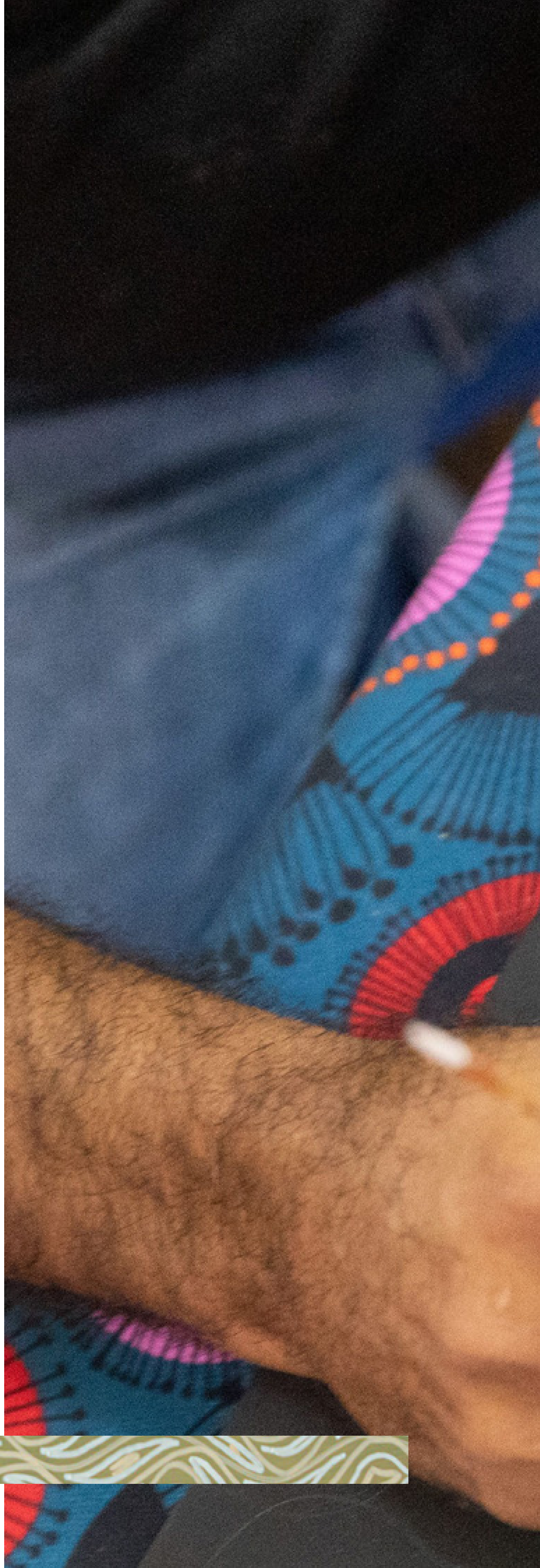
Promoting First Nations culture and business excellence into the UAE is key priority for the pilot Advisory Group and will be a major contributor to First Nations business success in the UAE.

Showcasing business excellence is also an important opportunity for First Nations businesses to share their culture and history. Sharing and celebrating these stories will deepen cultural and business ties, strengthening the Australia – UAE bilateral relationship.

The Australian Government will publish an Australian First Nations Capability Booklet for the UAE (Capability Booklet) to showcase Australia's First Nations culture and related business excellence. The Capability Booklet will introduce First Nations Australia and showcase select First Nations export-ready businesses from key priority sectors. The Capability Booklet will be an opportunity for First Nations people to share their messages on how to engage on Country, showcase First Nations innovators and supply chain businesses, and showcase First Nations partnerships in clean energy and related sectors.

In addition, the Australian First Nations-UAE Business Exchange program will offer opportunities for First Nations business to showcase their excellence and unique product offerings through representation in missions and other trade and investment-related events in both Australia and the UAE.

The department and Austrade will continue to highlight First Nations culture and business through their engagement in the UAE, including embedding First Nations art and culture in plans to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Bilateral Relations between Australia and the UAE in 2025 and beyond. This includes engaging First Nations artists and musicians.



PILLAR FOUR: Supporting the protection of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property

Protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), especially those embedded in exports, remains a major priority for First Nations businesses across Australia. The Australian Government has committed to introducing new laws to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional knowledge and cultural expressions, including to address the harm caused by fake art, merchandise and souvenirs.

Australia's interest in the protection of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property is reflected in the CEPA. Articles 17.1(4) and 17.6 of the Indigenous Trade and Investment Economic Cooperation chapter affirm Australia and the UAE's commitment to facilitate and support the development and maintenance of First Nations peoples' traditional knowledge and cultural expressions. Further, Article 17.4(2d) provides for the exchange of practices and policies regarding resale royalty rights, including for First Nations artists.

The Capability Booklet will strengthen understanding in the Emirati market of the importance of protecting ICIP with the UAE, and how protection of ICIP occurs in Australia.

Through the dedicated UAE First Nations Trade and Investment webpage, the Australian Government is providing information on IP protection for First Nations businesses exporting to the UAE, including appropriate referral pathways.

The Australian Government will also continue to explore opportunities to cooperate with the UAE on multilateral outcomes on IP-related aspects of genetic resources, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expression, including through the World Intellectual Property Organization.

5 PILLAR FIVE: Elevating First Nations interests and perspectives in the Australia-UAE investment relationship

Pillar five will better position First Nations businesses and communities to benefit from Australia's investment relationship with the UAE. This will include activities that:

- build UAE understanding of engaging and partnering with First Nations communities and traditional owners for inbound investment
- promote First Nations innovation in support of the Australian-UAE investment relationship
- explore opportunities for First Nations companies to partner with, or become part of the supply chains for, UAE investments both in Australia and abroad.

The Australian Government will, through the Australian First Nations -UAE Business Exchange Program, encourage greater First Nations representation in outbound and inbound investment missions. More in-market participation by First Nations businesses will introduce UAE investors to First Nations innovators and supply chain companies, and build mutual understanding.

State and territory governments, too, have a role to play in elevating First Nations representation in the UAE, including through their investment front door and concierge services. The Ministerial Council for Trade and Investment, chaired by the Minister for Trade and Tourism and involving trade and investment ministers from all states and territories, provides a focus for coordinating these efforts across jurisdictions. In implementing the 2025 National Statement on First Nations Trade and Investment, jurisdictions will collaborate to elevate First Nations representation in the UAE.

The Capability Booklet will provide Traditional Owners and First Nations communities with an opportunity to share best practice guidelines for how investors should engage with communities on Country. It will showcase stories of First Nations communities partnering with foreign investors, as well as provide resources on engaging Traditional Owners to assist UAE investors. These resources will include the First Nations Clean Energy Network's 'Building Capacity of Proponents Toolkit', as well as the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance's Dhawura Ngilan Business and Investor Guides.

The Capability Booklet will also include a collection of stories from First Nations entrepreneurs on how their innovation can support the Australia-UAE investment relationship, as well as how First Nations supply chain companies can support major projects. These stories will focus on the five CEPA Investment MOUs priority sectors: Green and Renewable Energy; Data Centres and Artificial Intelligence Projects; Food and Agriculture; Minerals; and Infrastructure Development.

Activity under this pillar will leverage existing programs to support First Nations communities to better engage with UAE investors in the clean energy transition. The Australian Government's First Nations Clean Energy Strategy provides a national framework to realise meaningful economic benefits and energy equity for First Nations people in the clean energy transition. The Strategy's objectives include 'growing the First Nations clean energy business sector' and 'empowering First Nations led coordination and capacity development'. These objectives are key to ensuring First Nations peoples can negotiate lasting benefits when engaging with investors.

The Government has provided A$74.6 million over three years from 2025-26 for a package that includes grants for First Nations peoples to obtain independent and professional advice, including to establish benefit sharing arrangements; support to engage in clean energy project development; access to clean energy information and resources; policy development to increase access to finance; and continuing the First Nations Clean Energy and Climate Change Advisory Committee for the lifespan of the Strategy. Progress will be tracked and monitored through an annual Implementation Plan, a stocktake of work underway across government that contributes to the Priority Actions identified in the Strategy.

The Australian Government will also provide funding for native title corporations to realise the potential held in their rights to traditional country through stronger negotiations with key economic stakeholders.iv

To assist in realising benefits from the investment relationship with the UAE, the First Nations CEO and Director Network will incorporate First Nations leaders drawn from across the Investment MOU priority sectors, as well as First Nations leaders from Native Title Representative Bodies and related organisations.

Priority Sectors for Australia's First Nations businesses

Creative Industries

CEPA provides opportunities for First Nations businesses in the creative industries to launch into the UAE and broader region. Tariffs on art and fashion will be eliminated immediately.

The creative industries sector in the Emirates has flourished significantly over the past few decades, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and the dynamic socio-economic environment of the region. As a melting pot of diverse cultures, the Emirates exemplifies a unique blend of traditional and contemporary art practices, which continue to evolve and influence the local and international art markets. This growth has been supported by the UAE Government's intentional growth of the art sector, as well as the rise of major art exhibitions and cultural events such as Art Dubai and Abu Dhabi Art fairs. These events draw a large number UAE-based, regional, and international collectors and curators, including nearly 100 visiting museums and institutions.

At the Emirate level, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah have all created strategies to boost their creative sectors by designating dedicated creative spaces and free zones, introducing various visa programs to encouraging professionals in the creative sectors to move to their cities, and facilitating easy business setups for them. Following the success of its Louvre museum, Abu Dhabi has invested in building a number of world leading museums including a Guggenheim, National History Museum and Zayed Museum. Bolstered by a diverse population of both Emirati citizens and non-Emirati residents, Dubai serves as a melting pot of cultures, providing a fertile ground for creative endeavours to flourish. As the city's population is projected to reach over 7 million by 2027, the potential consumer base for the creative sector continues to expand.

Further, the UAE has a growing interest in Australian First Nations art, with two First Nations artists invited to exhibit at the annual 2025 Abu Dhabi art festival. The Australian Embassy has promoted First Nations art and fashion through economic diplomacy

in the UAE The Northern Emirates continue to invest significantly in art and cultural programs. Chapter 17.4(2)(d) of CEPA promotes exchanging views and information on practices and policies regarding the resale royalty rights of artists, including First Nations artists.

The fashion market in the UAE is expected to reach a projected revenue of US$11.42 billion by 2030. The UAE is the second-largest apparel market in the Middle Eastern region and is expected to experience higher growth than Saudi Araba in the coming years. The UAE's luxury market is also expected to continue to accelerate in the years ahead and the country boasts the largest footwear market in the GCC. Fashion is proving resilient despite wider market uncertainty and is forecast to outpace regional and global competitors, driven in part by its strong cultural significance as a source of pride among residents.

While the market has a strong high-end luxury focus, with more than 202,000 US-dollar millionaires in the UAE, there is also a large section of the market seeking competitively priced, value products. Sustainable and ethically sourced fashion is also gaining traction supported by the UAE Government's active promotion of sustainability.

Further, the fashion e-commerce market in the UAE is predicted to grow to US$1.84 billion in 2025, with a projected market volume of US$2.39 billion by 2029. The UAE's strategic location makes it a gateway for cross-border e-commerce, attracting international brands and products.

Agrifood

The UAE's rising incomes and high dependence on imports present opportunities for Australian food and beverage exporters, particularly in the high-value processed foods, and whole, organic and functional food and beverage products. There is a particular interest from high-end restaurants and hotel chains in Australian First Nations bushfood products.

First Nations farmers and food and beverage producers will gain from the preferential access to the UAE's growing market for premium food and agricultural products, with elimination of tariffs on export products such as dairy, frozen beef and sheep meat. The UAE is Australia's 4th largest market for sheep meat, with Australia exporting 27,268 tonnes in 2024.

There is a significant opportunity for the growing number of boutique Australian First Nations wine

producers. The tariff on bottled and sparkling wine will be reduced to 45 per cent compared to the current applied tariff rate of 50 per cent. This provides Australian exporters with better access than many other competitors and a competitive advantage for Australia's annual wine exports to the UAE, which were valued at $18 million in 2023-24.

There are opportunities, too, for exporters of non-alcoholic beverages. The sector is experiencing significant growth in the UAE, driven by the country's predominantly Muslim population, with alternatives such as non-alcoholic beer seeing rising demand. The UAE also provides opportunities for the First Nations businesses with product offerings in sectors such as tea, coffee and kombucha.

Tariffs on pharmaceutical exports, and cosmetics, to the UAE will be locked at zero, ensuring a competitive edge for First Nations businesses exporting lotions and beauty products. First Nations botanical producers will achieve greater access to the large fragrance market in the UAE and wider Gulf region. The UAE fragrance market grew to US$748.9 million in 2024 and is expected to reach $US1.72 billion in 2030. This growth is fuelled by both growing domestic demand for luxury and premium fragrances, as well as the influx of tourists, particularly in Dubai.

Sustainable Agriculture

Climate-smart, sustainable agricultural practices will inform Australia's approach to meeting the UAE's food security challenges. In CEPA, Australia and the UAE have committed to promoting the inclusion of First Nations people, organisations and businesses in agri-food and agricultural trade and related activities – a major commercial opportunity.

Article 17.7, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, commits Australia and the UAE to cooperate in addressing these issues, and offers an opportunity for First Nations Australians to showcase thousands of years of experience in managing our unique environment.

Green Economy

The UAE's Green Growth Strategy aims to achieve sustainability in economic, social and environmental sectors, eliminating reliance on oil resources. The UAE is seeking to become a global leader in green economy, a centre for the export and re-export of green products and technologies, and to create a sustainable environment that endorses long-term economic growth. The UAE's Strategy spans the fields of energy, agriculture, investment and sustainable transport, as well as striving to improve the country's quality of life through a focus on green cities.

CEPA comes at a time of great opportunity for Australian businesses in the UAE's green economy transition. This is true for First Nations businesses and communities in particular. CEPA provides opportunities to facilitate and promote access to supply chains for First Nations businesses who export environmental goods and services, including those relevant to clean, renewable and efficient energy technology and other solutions that contribute to achieve net zero emissions.

Informed by traditional knowledge and underpinned by the world's oldest continuing culture, First Nations Australians are uniquely placed to inform Australia's settings and benefit from environmental protection initiatives and the transition to net zero.

Article 17.10 of CEPA recognises this important contribution made by First Nations people to the transition to net zero, the protection of the environment, and management of biodiversity.

Through the Agreement's provisions, and its Investment MOUs, First Nations businesses can benefit from opportunities arising from Australian and the UAE efforts to address trade-related environmental challenges, in areas such as addressing climate change, promoting the circular economy, reducing pollution, improving air quality, and preventing overfishing and illegal wildlife trade.

Critical Enabling Technologies

CEPA creates a framework for emerging First Nations technology businesses to explore opportunities to participate in the UAE's growing Critical and Enabling Technology sector. This sector comprises advanced technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, quantum computing and advanced materials that have the capability to drive innovating across numerous other sectors.

With substantial government and foreign investment in its technology sector, the UAE is poised to become a major player in the global market for artificial intelligence, data infrastructure and cloud

services. In 2022, the UAE government launched a digital-economy strategy that aims to increase the contribution of internet and technology-related goods and services from 11.7 per cent of GDP in 2021 to over 20 per cent by 2031. Data infrastructure is also a focus for investment, with forecasts indicating that the UAE's data-centre market will more than double in size by 2026 to reach US$12 billion.

In addition, the UAE has identified 'advanced defence manufacturing' in robotics and autonomous vehicles as a core focus of its Fourth Industrial Revolution Strategy. Its National Defence Strategy 2023 lists harnessing the power of AI in the military domain as a key defence priority for the UAE. There is continued investment in high-end capability and new technologies. Australia-UAE collaboration on defence could offer niche opportunities for involvement of First Nations businesses in the supply chain of defence products or provision of services. Another opportunity might be through Partnership and/or agreement with local industry and local industry enablers. For example, engaging with the defence industry enablers and system integrators who work with entities such as the UAE's Ministry of Defense, Tawazun Economic Council, and the government's single services portal. These firms identify requirements, present solutions and execute commercial contracts. This could be a good option for smaller Australian businesses offering specific products or services.

Services

Australia and the UAE are services-oriented economies, with two-way trade in services worth A$4.5 billion in 2024.

CEPA unlocks new opportunities for Australian service providers across more than 120 sectors and subsectors, including engineering, accounting, medical and education services to do business in the UAE. CEPA extends on the UAE's WTO commitments to Australia and it is the UAE's best-FTA practice.

Australian First Nations service providers will benefit from the UAE's commitments on market access and national treatment (to treat foreign and domestic suppliers equally) in a range of sectors, including:

- Professional services including broad commitments covering legal, accounting, engineering, architectural, medical, dental, and veterinary services
- Other business services including advertising, management consulting, scientific and technical consulting, and services incidental to manufacturing, as well as communication and audiovisual services
- Computer and related services including software implementation, data processing and maintenance and repair
- Research and development including on natural sciences, and social sciences and humanities
- Distribution services including wholesale trade services and retailing services
- Financial services including broad commitments on a range of financial services, including locking in 100 per cent Australian ownership for Australian firms in Dubai International Financial Centre for certain activities, such as banking, capital markets, asset management, insurance and reinsurance
- Health services, with guarantees of 100 per cent Australian ownership subject to economic needs tests. Australian heath firms operating in Dubai Health Care City will not be subject to an economic needs test
- Education services including full commitments on secondary and higher education services (excluding public education) allowing full Australian ownership for Australian services firms
- Environmental services including nature and landscape protection services, sewage, sanitation and refuse disposal
- First Nations tourism and travel related services and recreational services.

Further, CEPA encourages increased collaboration between UAE and Australian professional services accreditation and regulatory bodies. Australian professionals benefit from provisions to support mutual recognition of qualifications and greater certainty as they enter the UAE labour market.

The FTA's services commitments also preserve Australia's right to implement policy measures that accord more favourable treatment to Indigenous Australian people or organisations, and reserve Australia's right to adopt or maintain any measure with respect to creative arts and cultural heritage, which includes indigenous traditional practice and contemporary cultural expression.


BORRGORO
COAST TO CREEK TOU
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Investment

The UAE is a valuable source of future investment for Australia. The UAE Sovereign-Wealth-Funds and Family Offices are respectively managing US$2 trillion and US$1.5 trillion in assets and currently invest approximately A$14 billion into Australia.

The CEPA investment outcome is a comprehensive package that supports and promotes quality two-way investment. It covers key sectors relevant to Australia's clean energy transition and Future Made in Australia objectives. The outcome comprises a chapter in CEPA; a separate Investment Agreement; and five innovative Investment Cooperation Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). The MOUs entered into force on 6 November 2024.

Through the Action Plan, and in alignment with Investment Cooperation MOUs, the Australian Government will facilitate closer relationships between First Nations business leaders and UAE investors. First Nations traditional knowledge and insights hold immense value for elements of the Investment MOUs, particularly Green and Renewable Energy and Food and Agriculture, offering innovative approaches to climate resilience and sustainable development.

Further detail about the Investment MOUs are as follows.

The Investment Agreement includes investment protections and non-discrimination provisions that provide certainty to Australian and UAE investors while preserving the Government's right to regulate in the public interest. It does not include Investor-State Dispute Settlement provisions.

The Investment Agreement also includes provisions on corporate social responsibility and encourages meaningful engagement and dialogue between investors and First Nations people and local communities. Chapter 17 incorporates similar provisions and highlights the importance of adhering to international responsible business conduct standards, guidelines and principles that have been endorsed or supported by Australia or the UAE, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Green and Renewable Energy

With both the UAE and Australia outlining ambitious targets to reduce carbon emissions and achieve net zero by 2050, our two nations will focus on facilitating investment in key areas of green and renewable energy. This includes supporting large-scale green and renewable energy generation projects, such as green hydrogen, solar, wind and hydro energy.

Investments will also target the development of low-carbon liquid fuels, including technology pathways to produce advanced synthetic and biofuels, with a focus on sustainable aviation fuels, renewable diesel, biodiesel, bioethanol and e-fuels, as well as energy-efficient and low-emission technologies.

In addition, both countries will encourage the adoption of innovative technologies to reduce production costs, improve energy transportation infrastructure, enhance energy storage systems and deploy carbon capture solutions.

Data Centres and AI Projects

Australia and the UAE will look to facilitate and drive investment in data centres and artificial intelligence. This includes exploring and assessing investment opportunities in new and green data centres and in the development and deployment of safe and responsible AI solutions, incorporating safety by design.

Minerals

Australia and the UAE will focus on promoting investment in the minerals sector through facilitating cooperation in areas that explore and promote projects in mineral exploration and extraction, mine development, processing and mineral marketing. This cooperation will also support responsible and sustainable governance in the mineral sector, and training and education opportunities for talent across the mineral value chain.

Food and Agriculture

As food security becomes ever more important, the UAE and Australia will seek to drive investment in areas that address growing demand for agricultural goods. This includes supporting investment in supply chains for bilateral agricultural exports, developing projects that enable producers and processors to diversify and create value-added products, advancing efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promoting best land management practices, and implementing climate-smart sustainable agricultural technologies and practices.

Infrastructure Development

Australia and the UAE will look at facilitating and driving investment in infrastructure projects that enhance productivity, economic growth, and resilience to environmental impacts, while supporting the transition to net zero emissions. This includes projects in transport, social infrastructure, advanced technologies, and sustainable tourism.

The list of investment areas set out in these MOUs is not exhaustive and both governments welcome further investment across a wide range of sectors. The private sector plays a critical role in driving investment and the purpose of these MOUs is to set out priority areas for two-way investment for Australia and the UAE. They are also designed to emphasise both governments' commitments to taking practical, appropriate steps to facilitate and promote two-way investment within existing investment frameworks.

The investment outcomes, including the MOUs, will not impact the operation of Australia's foreign investment framework.

Endnotes

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