

16 March 2017

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

### **Inquiry into Australia's trade and investment relationship with the United Kingdom**

Swinburne University of Technology welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into Australia's trade and investment relationship with the United Kingdom.

Swinburne commends the Australian Government for referring this important matter to a parliamentary inquiry, given the significant opportunities presented by the economic and geopolitical change underway in Europe following Brexit.

#### ***An opportunity for Australia***

Britain's decision to depart from the European Union has presented great uncertainty and unique challenges and potentially serious, complex consequences for the European region.

However, Australia should be encouraged that Britain has signalled that it is willing to enter into new trade partnerships following its departure from the EU, and Australia is well positioned to redefine and expand the Anglo-Australian trade and investment relationships.

#### ***Higher education***

The focus of Swinburne's submission will be on the educational and research opportunities presented by Brexit.



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Swinburne requests consideration of an unfettered exchange of both educational and research services being enshrined in any revised trade partnership. This exchange would include enabling free movement of academic staff and students between Britain and Australia and the opportunity to participate in research activities in each other's countries with no more regulation or scrutiny than would be ordinarily applied to a domestic provider.

This approach is supported by our highly similar systems and standards, and the innate high level of quality assurance that is therefore present in both of our regulatory environments.

A secondary but equally important component of this free exchange would be reciprocal recognition of qualifications between our two nations.

For example, a degree or certificate obtained in either country ought to be recognised as valid in both countries without the need to re-train or otherwise complete onerous further compliance testing before being able to commence work. It would be suggested that this treatment also be extended to fellow Commonwealth nations New Zealand and Canada, who also share this close alignment in standards.

To this end, it would be desirable that a Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) clause be included in any future agreement, to ensure that Australia's competitive position is secured should Britain extend beneficial treatment to other trade partners in the education sector.

In order to link as closely as possible to the developing trade agenda between Australia and the United Kingdom, Swinburne recommends a greater focus on higher education partnerships in the growth areas of materials and manufacturing. Further, greater support should be given to enterprise and entrepreneurial endeavours across both nations, which will in turn deliver greater international trade opportunities.

Preferential access to grant funding would help Australian and UK researchers overcome barriers to collaborative research. Bilateral research agreements would not represent a separate stream of research funding, but would enable Australian and UK collaborations to be submitted to standard open grants opportunities in both nations.

#### **Recommendation 1**

That the Commonwealth Government give consideration to the establishment of an unfettered exchange of educational and research services in a new agreement with the United Kingdom, including reciprocal recognition of qualifications.

## **Recommendation 2**

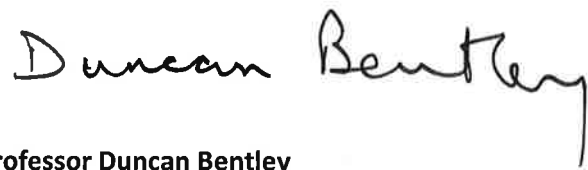
That the Commonwealth Government encourage partnerships between higher education providers and industry across both nations, with a particular focus on the growth areas of materials and manufacturing, while also fostering entrepreneurship efforts which will contribute to growing international trade.

## **Recommendation 3**

That the Commonwealth Government give consideration to policy measures which would allow for preferential access to grant funding for research collaborations between the UK and Australia.

Thank you for taking the time to consider Swinburne's submission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duncan Bentley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Professor Duncan Bentley**

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)  
Swinburne University of Technology