



**Export Council of Australia**

The Voice for Australia's Exporters

## **The ECA Urges Government to Focus On Trade This Election**

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As part of the Federal Election, the Export Council of Australia (ECA) is urging the elected Government to address trade policy issues pertinent to the Australian international business community.

As the Australian economy continues its post-mining boom transition, now is the time to improve trade facilitation at home, break down non-tariff barriers abroad, and develop long-term strategic policies that aim to increase and diversify exports.

Chief Executive Officer of the ECA Lisa McAuley says that in order to create a clear vision for Australia's trade future, a national plan should be developed that involves a broad consultative group consisting of representatives from government, peak industry bodies and the members of the business community.

"Many of our key export competitors currently have long term business plans to develop export growth in their countries and Australia needs to look at introducing a bipartisan long-term plan for developing trade opportunities here.

"Priorities such as the growth of the services sector, which currently comprises only 20 per cent of Australia's exports, could be more adequately promoted through a national forum.

"Developing a single window for trade and improving hard and soft infrastructure, also need to be recognised as priorities in Australia's trade agenda. In order to promote Australia's competitiveness abroad, trade policy must serve to improve trade facilitation by creating efficiencies and simplifying procedures.

"Improving freight movement efficiency and implementing a comprehensive national freight and supply chain strategy, are key elements.

"The ECA hopes that the elected government will continue to focus on expanding the network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) that benefit Australia. Educating companies through the FTA portal—which we are pleased is now being expanded to all existing FTA's—and other means must be supported to promote awareness of the advantages associated with the trade agreements.

"We are pleased that \$1.8 million over four years has been allocated in the 2016 federal budget to enhance the online FTA portal, although feel this is insufficient to deliver the desired outcomes.

"While there has been much progress opening up market access opportunities with Australia's key trade partners through FTAs, often non-tariff barriers (NTBs) can undermine these hard-fought achievements. Taking a whole-of-government approach and adequately resourcing the relevant government departments that are responsible with tackling NTBs needs to be a focus.

"It goes without saying that programs vital to exporters, including the Export Market Development Grant scheme and the R&D Tax Incentive should continue to operate and be adequately funded. Many of our members say they never would have exported or wouldn't have achieved the success they have today if it weren't for these programs," Ms McAuley said.

To see a full list of the pre-election priorities for trade, visit the [ECA's website](#).

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