



Australia-Japan Free Trade Agreement

Newsletter Update

The first round of the Australia-Japan Free Trade Agreement negotiations was held on 23 and 24 April in Canberra. The talks got off to a very good start.

The Japanese side was led by Masaharu Kohno, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Japanese delegation included senior representatives their key ministries, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Finance. The Australian delegation was also a senior one and drawn from more than nine Australian government agencies.

We agreed an overall approach to the negotiations. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to beginning negotiations with all products and issues on the table with a view to concluding a WTO-plus, comprehensive FTA through a single undertaking.

We agreed a comprehensive list of issues to be discussed in the negotiations which, depending on the outcome of the negotiations, may form chapters of the agreement. The list included goods (agriculture and industrials), services and investment as well as issues such as e-commerce, movement of natural persons and competition.

Negotiating rounds will be held every two to three months and alternate between Japan and Australia. That means we will probably hold another three rounds this year, one in July and then another two before the close of the year.

The second round of negotiations will see an intensive exchange on all of the agreed issues. That will lead into the development of the text of the agreement from the third round.

At Japan's request, and reflecting its clear intent to progress the negotiations quickly where possible, we held expert's meetings on intellectual property and government procurement.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has completed an initial series of industry consultations in the states and territories. This program of consultations will be ongoing and will continue in the lead-up to the second negotiating round. We also continue to welcome submissions on issues relevant to the Japan FTA.

Japan FTA Taskforce, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade