

May 2018

MEMBERS MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Three months have passed since our former CEO departed the organisation. This message is to update all members on recent ASR activities and establish a direct email channel to avoid any further hiatus in communications, pending appointment of a new CEO in the new Financial Year.

The Board has been very active on behalf of the ASR membership, focused closely on vital services trade advocacy and pursuit of services industry competitiveness and innovation. A major revamp and update of the ASR website is also underway to reposition our public profile.

The ASR Media Release on the 2018 Federal Budget was delivered to Ministers by hand on Budget night and is available on our website at <http://australianservicesroundtable.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ASR-Media-Release-Budget-2018.pdf>. The Budget provides new funding to support work to increase the competitiveness of the services export sector. ASR continues to engage closely with DFAT on completion of the OECD study “Australia’s Services Performance in the Global Economy” which we expect to see launched in the coming months. Implementation of the reforms recommended by the OECD will be of critical importance in delivering stronger outcomes for Australian services business.

Digital trade and specifically freedom of cross-border data flows has been a focus of our recent activity. I highlight the link to our website below where you will find the letter we wrote recently with other services coalitions around the work to the Member States of the European Union, about the European Commission proposal on data flows. We are very concerned that unless industry engages closely on this issue right now, Australia will be confronted with highly undesirable proposals on digital trade in the forthcoming negotiations for an Australia EU FTA (which we expect will be announced next week) See <http://australianservicesroundtable.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/GSC-Letter-to-the-Member-States-of-the-EU-re-Data-Flows-Proposal-April-2018-1.pdf>

ASR members also contributed this month to the content of an Australian government submission to the Chinese Government regarding China's draft Provisions on Internet Security Supervision and Inspection by Public Security Organs. The Australian government submission was an opportunity to reiterate to Chinese authorities the importance of benchmarking its business regulations against international best practices and working in consultation with the business community. I will provide a copy of the submission to ASR members on request.

The ASR Board also participated in as many as 4 discussions with DFAT’s new Digital Trade Taskforce as DFAT seeks to deepen its understanding of business stakeholder interests in digital trade rules. This is especially important for the plurilateral e commerce negotiations which we hope can be formally launched in Geneva before the end of the year. New digital trade content has become available on the [DFAT website](#).

ASR’s SME Self-Mentoring Program has been discontinued, pending a forthcoming discussion on the future of the program among the SME members themselves. Of the 200 SME associates benefitting from our mentoring events over the last two years, only two renewed their associate status - while three upgraded to full ASR membership. The Board congratulates the three new SME members and expects that you will find your membership beneficial. The SME discussion will take place on the afternoon of **Thursday 24 May**. SME members and associates as well as organisations representing SMEs, will shortly receive a separate email invitation.

With respect to ASR events, a reception was held in Adelaide for South-Australian based members, hosted by the Institute for International Trade last month. Up-coming events focus on the impact of new technologies on trade in services and on the FTAs with Indonesia, Hong Kong and the European Union; members will shortly receive ASR event invitations.

ASR continues meanwhile to make a strong contribution to APEC public-private dialogue (PPD) and evaluation of progress in implementation of the APEC Services Competitiveness Roadmap. ASR Board members addressed the APEC Group on Services in Port Moresby in March and the APEC Business Advisory Council Working Group on Regional Economic Integration in Tokyo in April and will address the APEC Services Symposium in Singapore later this month. ASR is leading the design of the next APEC PPD on Services in Port Moresby in August, to which all Asia Pacific Services Coalition members will be invited.

Jane Drake-Brockman
Chairman of the Board
Australian Services Roundtable