

Communiqué for the COAG Industry and Skills Council Meeting 5 November 2015

The Council of Australia Governments (COAG) Industry and Skills Council (Industry session) held its fourth meeting in Sydney on 5 November. The Council holds separate industry and skills sessions. Commonwealth Government Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, The Hon Christopher Pyne MP, chaired the industry session. State and territory ministers and officials with portfolio responsibility for industry represented their respective jurisdictions. The Government of New Zealand is also a member of the Council and was represented.

Industry Session

Innovation and Science Agenda

Minister Pyne discussed the Commonwealth Government's innovation agenda which is central to boosting Australia's economic growth and creating jobs and industries for the future. Council Members discussed key challenges and constraints to innovation, science and the commercialisation of research. Council Members committed to providing input on actions being taken in their jurisdictions to promote and foster innovation and science, and to look for opportunities for joint or complementary work. Council Members also agreed to investigate opportunities for proactive reform of key sectors to create a favourable environment for innovative technology and disruptive business models to penetrate restricted markets.

Food Standards Regulation

Council Members noted that recent consultations indicate that the food industry does not consider the Food Standards Code as a source of significant regulatory burden. Council Members agreed there may be opportunities for government and industry to work together to reduce duplication between government and industry-imposed compliance requirements, whilst retaining the integrity of food safety standards.

Industry Growth Centres Initiative Update

Minister Pyne provided information to Council Members on the progress of the Industry Growth Centres Initiative. Council Members agreed to a set of principles for cooperation between the Growth Centres and relevant state and territory sector-based initiatives. These principles will guide engagement between Growth Centres and the states and territories as they seek to collaborate and align their activities. Council Members committed to engaging with Growth Centres as appropriate to build on existing discussions and commitments. Council Members also agreed to review the alignment of national and state and territory incentives across trade, tax, industry and market development policy to strengthen our global competitive advantage.

Country of Origin Food Labelling

Minister Pyne provided information to Council Members on the progress of reforms to country of origin food labelling. The changes are designed to give consumers clearer and more meaningful information about the origin of food and, in the case of products made or grown in Australia, the proportion of Australian ingredients. Council Members noted that the Commonwealth Government has already begun consultation with state and territory and New Zealand governments on these proposed labelling reforms and they look forward to working cooperatively on this issue.

Structural Adjustment

Council Members noted the impact of structural adjustment and accelerating regional disparities; and noted areas where governments could work together to support industrial transformation of the Australian economy. Council Members agreed that further work is justified to improve cooperation on the best approach to the impact of significant structural change. Council Members agreed to identifying opportunities for working in a complementary way to align strategies across jurisdictions.

Procurement and Local Content

Council Members supported procurement policies which promote growth of Australian industry and consider Australia's international obligations and best practice. Council Members agreed to working collaboratively on a proposed discussion paper that will explore opportunities and challenges to increasing economic and industry growth through government procurement.

The High Growth Potential of a National Space Economy

Council Members noted that space technologies have significant potential to contribute to Australia's industrial transition from lower value-added activities to an advanced economy that cultivates and commercialises innovative technologies. Minister Pyne provided information to Council Members on the Commonwealth Government's review of the legislation governing civil space activities in Australia. The review will ensure the legislation appropriately balances Australia's international obligations with encouraging industry innovation and entrepreneurship. Council Members supported developing a paper identifying all space economy activities across states and territories for consideration to enable the development of future strategies for the sector.

Building Product and Imported Goods Conformity with Australian Standards

Council Members noted that building regulation and responsibility for building product compliance and enforcement is a state and territory responsibility. Council Members noted that the Building Ministers' Forum (BMF) has agreed to two streams of work to address: (a) non-conforming building products and (b) fire safety in high rise buildings. The BMF will be receiving reports on progress of both streams of work at its next meeting in mid-February 2016. Council Members agreed to consider the outcomes from the two streams of BMF commissioned work before considering any additional streams of work.