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## Communiqué for the COAG Industry and Skills Council Meeting 4 August 2017

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Members of the industry stream of the COAG Industry and Skills Council met in Sydney on 4 August 2017. Senator the Hon Arthur Sinodinos, the Australian Government Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, chaired the meeting. State and territory ministers with responsibility for industry represented their respective jurisdictions. The Government of New Zealand is also a member of the council and was represented. The meeting focussed on two main themes: *driving competitiveness* and *making it easier to do business in Australia*.

### ***Driving competitiveness***

A presentation by the Office of Innovation and Science Australia outlined the findings of the recent performance review of the national innovation system, including the 2030 Strategic Plan. The plan will help guide investment in the Australian innovation, science and research system.

Ministers agreed to national innovation objectives to leverage Australia's efforts and investments on innovation. The Commonwealth, states and territories will work together to improve complementarity of existing arrangements and leverage state and territory networks, expertise and experience by building and fostering:

- business simplification
- skills and talent and entrepreneurship
- innovation infrastructure
- collaboration
- investment
- sectors of future opportunity for competitive strength and strategic priority.

It was agreed that the digital economy is an overarching enabler of innovation.

Given the range of innovation initiatives implemented by all levels of government, articulating common objectives is critical to leverage the investments being made, ensure best value for money and avoid duplication to enable a cohesive national innovation framework. Having national innovation objectives will support practical actions by jurisdictions to collaborate, share information, align activities where appropriate, and maximize the value of their investments.

Ministers also considered opportunities to work together to further develop sectors of competitive strength and strategic priority and to ensure Australia can create future jobs.

Governments need evidence to maximise innovation policy outcomes. Ministers considered some evidence on what works in innovation policies, as well as data analysis being undertaken across Australia and New Zealand, and agreed to progress work together to improve their overall understanding of what works.

Regulatory frameworks need to be responsive to change, reduce barriers and minimise red tape, in an environment where technological innovation and disruptive business models are displacing established firms, products and alliances and at the same time potentially providing more consumer

choice and improved products and services. Ministers discussed a specific reform opportunity to be reviewed as a matter of priority out of session. Ministers agreed to adopt principles to guide nationally consistent approaches to regulating technical innovation and disruptive business models. Jurisdictions have been proactive in addressing the regulation of new technologies, and ministers noted the inter-jurisdictional collaboration under way in these areas.

### **National space industry**

Heightened momentum on the development of the Australian space sector provides opportunity for jurisdictions to continue to promote and advance the space industry. Ministers welcomed the establishment of the Space Industry Capability Review through the Expert Reference Group, headed up by Dr Megan Clark, who provided an update to members. Ministers discussed options to support the development of an Australian space industry, and considered actions and work that jurisdictions are undertaking to promote space sector development. Ministers noted the International Astronautical Congress taking place in Adelaide in September 2017.

### ***Making It Easier to Do Business in Australia***

The National Business Simplification Initiative is about making regulation less complex for businesses and streamlining business interaction with all levels of government. Ministers and officials from all jurisdictions met in November 2016 and agreed to work together to make it simpler to do business in Australia under the National Business Simplification Initiative. Since then, all jurisdictions have been engaged in progressing reforms, and bilateral projects are under way in most states. Today, Ministers noted the progress to date and considered further opportunities to work together.

All jurisdictions agreed to continue working together on business simplification and that simplifying the process of employing a person was a national business simplification priority. Ministers further agreed to prioritise working together to reduce the burden on small business. Small business has a big impact on the Australian economy. If it was easier for these businesses to employ staff, owners might not think twice about hiring an additional person. If one out of every 50 small businesses currently without employees started employing just one person, this could create 25,000 jobs.

### ***Other items***

Ministers also received an update on the Building Ministers Forum, including on the establishment of the expert group on compliance.

Work will continue on how procurement can drive economic and industry growth. The future of work will be considered at the next meeting.