



PRIME MINISTER

29/95

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON PJ KEATING MP

PROPOSED TRANS-TASMAN MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENT

I am pleased to announce today a decision by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to release, in conjunction with the New Zealand Government, a discussion paper on 'A Proposal for the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition of Standards for Goods and Occupations'.

The objective of the proposed scheme is to reduce regulatory barriers to the trans-Tasman trade of goods and movement of people practising registered occupations. The release of the discussion paper marks the commencement of a public consultation period lasting until 31 July.

One of the early initiatives of COAG was the signing of the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) in May 1992.

The MRA was a significant reform for Australia. For the first time, an enterprise could sell its products anywhere in Australia without having to comply with a range of different State regulations relating to product standards, testing and certification, packaging and labelling.

In many instances, this has led to reductions in compliance costs and increased economies of scale for business as well as greater choice for consumers.

Similarly, a person registered to practise an occupation in one State or Territory is now able to obtain automatic registration to practise an equivalent occupation in any other, without having to go through the whole registration process again.

A Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement would extend the application of mutual recognition to New Zealand, leading to benefits for Australian and New Zealand businesses, consumers and service providers.

Tariff barriers having been eliminated between Australia and New Zealand under the Closer Economic Relations (CER) Trade Agreement, a mutual recognition agreement would reduce barriers to trade arising out of divergent regulations and standards.

For Australian business, a TTMRA will create a market of over 20 million people in which they can sell their goods free of tariffs and regulatory barriers to trade.

Initiatives to support the reduction of regulatory barriers to trade are being considered by APEC.

A Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement would put Australia and New Zealand at the forefront of reducing regulatory barriers to trade and set a positive example to other APEC members as to what is achievable.

CANBERRA

11 April 1995