

Chief Executive Officer's report



Year in review

The year in review was an important one for Austrade from a number of perspectives, but most profoundly following the change of Government on 24 November 2007.

The new Government

took the decision to fold Invest Australia and the Global Opportunities program into Austrade. This has created a fully integrated trade and investment agency at the Commonwealth level. The Minister for Trade, the Hon Simon Crean MP, also moved quickly to revitalise the Export Market Development Grant scheme, passing legislation in June 2008 to expand the scheme and committing a further \$50 million to the scheme for 2009–10.

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At the same time, Austrade refocused its activities in response to the priorities of the new Government. This included work on enhancing service offerings to recognise the importance of deeper and more sustainable export and investment activity by Australian businesses. It also included streamlining industry and sectoral activity, particularly with a focus on global and regional supply chains and on emerging industry sectors such as financial services, clean energy and environmental services. Austrade also undertook innovative and strategic business missions such as a financial services technology mission to Microsoft headquarters.

Austrade worked to deepen Australia's commercial engagement in growth markets such as India and China, with components of the program including major activities such as the Utsav (Celebrate) Australia promotion in India and Business Club Australia business matching in China.

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As well as refocusing its activities and programs to the priorities of the new Government and to changes in the international business environment, Austrade continued to provide its core services to small, medium-sized and large businesses throughout Australia.

During the year Austrade worked directly with over 15,500 businesses, helping 5,301 clients to achieve over \$23 billion in export sales. Austrade assisted a further 1,648 exporters through partnerships and alliances with the private sector and another 1,031 businesses indirectly through traders, consolidators and agents.

Austrade provided support to Australian businesses seeking to invest offshore in a wide range of industries, including the retail, mining, medical, pharmaceutical and automotive sectors. These offshore investments were worth a total of \$2.8 billion.

Austrade has long-standing and beneficial partnerships with state and territory governments, industry associations and regional development bodies and worked closely with these allies during the year to deliver programs and services such as TradeStart, the New Exporter Development Program (NEDP), Business Club Australia and the Australian Export Awards program. Other key partners included advisers to Australian business from the banking, business consultancy, legal and logistics sectors.

In 2007–08, Austrade organised business missions, visits, events and networking opportunities in major markets, based on a broad range of industry and market strategies. In addition, Austrade seminars and briefings in Australia on international markets and industry opportunities were attended by more than 4,000 people. Over 3,550 business matching meetings were made for international buyers looking to source products and services from Australian businesses.

There was strong demand for the EMDG scheme in 2007–08. Overall expenditure on the scheme totalled \$160.88 million and 3,933 grants were paid to EMDG recipients.

Austrade continued to support the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on trade policy, including promoting opportunities arising from free trade agreements with New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and the United States, and providing input into other negotiations. Major support was provided for international visits and engagements involving the Prime Minister, the Trade Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade, the Hon John Murphy MP, as well as other Ministers.

Over the year, Austrade staff have demonstrated great energy and dedication in assisting Australian businesses to export and invest overseas. The work done by staff across Australia and around the world, in collaboration with allies and partners, has continued to develop the community of Australians involved in international business. I convey my appreciation for their work.

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Year ahead

The decision by the Government to integrate trade and investment within the one agency provides Austrade with a mandate to deliver a more comprehensive package of services and programs to assist businesses seeking to engage in inward and outward investment as well as exporting.

Over the coming year, Austrade will complete the integration of the Global Opportunities program and inward foreign direct investment (FDI) promotion into an integrated service offering delivered by the onshore and offshore network. Austrade, working with partners and allies, will seek to increase the involvement of Australian businesses in foreign direct investment, major projects, strategic alliances, global supply chains, joint ventures and other international opportunities. Austrade will further focus assistance to key industry sectors such as services, financial services, clean energy and the environment.

In implementing this mandate, Austrade will continue to work closely with other Commonwealth agencies and state and territory governments, including through the Ministerial Council on International Trade, to encourage more Australian businesses to initiate trade and investment and deepen their engagement in overseas markets.

The Review of Export Policies and Programs, due at the end of August 2008, and the proposed new Austrade business board will further guide Austrade in implementing the Government's agenda on improving productivity, international competitiveness, investment and export growth.

Austrade will continue to play an important role in the Government's agenda to build a strong foundation for Australia's future economic prosperity.

Peter O'Byrne | Chief Executive Officer