

s 22

~~OFFICIAL Sensitive~~

DFAT logo

**MEDIA  
TALKING  
POINTS  
DISTRIBUTION:  
STANDARD****Topic: TRADE****Subject: Australia-UK FTA****Originating Division:  
RTD****Version Date: 27/8/2020****Version: 3**

s 22

**Expiry: 27/09/2020****Talking Points**

s22

*If asked: There are reports in the UK media this week that former Prime Minister Tony Abbott has been appointed to a role in the UK's Board of Trade. Can you confirm that this reporting is correct? Is this a conflict of interest?*

- *My understanding is that the UK government is yet to publicly confirm their appointment to their board of trade.*
  - *These appointments are a matter for the UK government*
- *If Mr Abbott is appointed to the UK Board of Trade, I reiterate Prime Minister Morrison's statement yesterday morning that the appointment will be a "good hire" for the UK Government.*
- *Until the appoint is confirmed, there is little point in speculating about a possible conflict of interest*
  - *I am confident Mr Abbott would ensure that any current employment does not conflict with his former role in the Australian Government.*

## Media Interest

*On 27 August, Australian Foreign Minister, the Hon Marise Payne, was interviewed on ABC Radio and questioned on the UK's possible appointment of former Prime Minister Tony Abbott to the UK Board of Trade. Minister Payne state that Mr Abbott would have been given an exemption to travel to the UK via "the appropriate application process" and noted he would be required to comply with Australia's foreign interference legislation.*

*On 26 August, the UK Sun newspaper reported that Mr Abbott was set to be appointed joint President of the relaunched British Board of Trade. The role will involve 'championing exports and inward and outward investment' and 'drumming up deals for Britain around the world.' Media commentary on the story suggests that there are some inaccuracies in the Sun article, and that Mr Abbott would instead have an advisory role on the Board. The British High Commission stated that reports were "premature." The UK Shadow International Trade Secretary, Emily Thornbury, called the decision a "absolutely staggering appointment" and it was also criticised by former Australian High Commissioner to the UK Mike Rann. The story was republished across Australian news media outlets, including in the Australian, AFR, ABC News, all of whom referenced Mr Abbott's public support for the UK's withdrawal after the Brexit vote. SBS News also stated that "questions have now been raised" as to whether Mr Abbott would have to register as an agent of foreign influence under Australia's transparency laws.*

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22 ; [NSD - Terrorism and Crisis Policy](#)  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** FW: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]  
**Date:** Monday, 14 September 2020 4:18:08 PM

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~~**PROTECTED**~~

Hi s 22 and team

Fyi, s 22 .  
 We're responding to an FOI and a QON which refer to any Australian govt advocacy on his behalf or financial contributions (none in both cases).

regards

s 22

---

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Monday, 14 September 2020 4:12 PM  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
 s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22  
 s 22 ; Kevin Magee <Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au>; Elisabeth Bowes <Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au>; s 22 ; s 22  
 s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]

~~**PROTECTED**~~

Hi s 22

DFAT has received two FOI request. The first is focused on any assistance etc Mr Abbot may have received in relation to the position with the UK Board of Trade (same as the one you shared with us):

“Specifically, we seek any correspondence (electronic or otherwise) between Tony Abbott and DFAT/PM&C regarding his consideration of, and subsequent acceptance, of a role as a UK trade adviser.”

s 22

s 47E(d)

. I'll let you know when it's cleared.

s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 14 September 2020 2:56 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; zz [External]

s 22; Kevin Magee

<[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22

s 22; s 22; s 22

s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC - PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

We received a revised FOI request from s 47G(1)(a). Did DFAT receive also? And we'd be very grateful if you could share your estimates brief with us in due course.

Many thanks

s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Friday, 11 September 2020 4:54 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; s 22

s 22; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth

Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22; s 22

s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC - PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22, yes consistent with our approach.

s 22

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**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Friday, 11 September 2020 3:14 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; zz [External]

s 22 ; Kevin Magee  
<[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22  
s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

For your visibility, see attached our proposed draft answer for this QoN, before we move it to SES clearance. Is our answer for Q1 still consistent with your drafted QoN answers, as well as Q4 on expenses?

Regards

s 22

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Thursday, 10 September 2020 10:26 AM  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22  
s 22 ; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22 ; s 22  
s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Indeed.

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Thursday, 10 September 2020 10:24 AM  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; zz [External]  
s 22 ; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22  
s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Thanks s 22 . We're also turning our minds to possible estimates briefing.

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Thursday, 10 September 2020 10:10 AM  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; s 22  
s 22; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22; s 22  
s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22, I had a chat with Lauren Barrons and she emailed some more information and contact details for someone in IPEA. I'll call her today and let you know the outcome.

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Thursday, 10 September 2020 9:55 AM  
**To:** s 22; s 22  
s 22  
**Cc:** s 22; zz [External]  
s 22; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22  
s 22; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

s 22. Wanted to check in on this issue – was Finance able to help?

s 22

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Monday, 7 September 2020 3:01 PM  
**To:** s 22; s 22  
s 22  
**Cc:** s 22; s 22  
s 22; 'Kevin Magee' <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; 'Elisabeth Bowes' <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22; s 22  
s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22 – attached for info is the FOI request we received (directed to DFAT also, assume you will see in due course).

Also a link to the IPEA for background. <https://www.ipea.gov.au/fpe/full-report/Abbott/Tony/Former%20Prime%20Minister/2020-01-01>



s 22

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**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 7 September 2020 2:57 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; s 22

<s 22>; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22; s 22

s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

As discussed – we checked with Ministerial and Parliamentary Support Branch here for a contact at the IPEA. The switch is 02 6215 3000 or [enquiries@ipea.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ipea.gov.au). Alternatively you could go directly to Lauren Barons, Assistant Secretary, DoF – s 22 or [lauren.barons@finance.gov.au](mailto:lauren.barons@finance.gov.au) and she should be able to guide you further.

s 22

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**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 7 September 2020 2:41 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; s 22

s 22; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22; s 22

s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

No, we haven't. Should we?

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**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 7 September 2020 2:14 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; zz [External]

s 22; Kevin Magee

<[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22

s 22; s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

Quick question – did you consult the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority on your answer to Q4? (former PMs' expenditure)

Thanks

s 22

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**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 7 September 2020 1:58 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22  
s 22

**Cc:** s 22; s 22  
s 22; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22; s 22  
s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

PROTECTED

Hi s 22

The response hasn't been cleared yet but the current draft is s47C, s47E(d)  
Understand PM&C has received an FOI request today also.

Thanks

s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 7 September 2020 12:38 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22  
s 22

**Cc:** s 22; s 22  
s 22; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22; s 22  
s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22 and s 22

You will have seen over the weekend Mr Abbott's appointment as an adviser to the Board of Trade was announced/confirmed. Just wondering if you have finalised your response to the QoN s 47C, s 47E(d)

Many thanks

s 22

s 22

Europe Trade Section

**Europe & Latin America Division**  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

E | s 22  
T | s 22  
M | s 22

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**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Friday, 4 September 2020 2:12 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; zz [External]

s 22; Kevin Magee

<[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22

s 22; s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~**PROTECTED**~~

Many thanks s 22, and especially for the quick turnaround. We'll share the response with you once cleared.

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**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Friday, 4 September 2020 1:28 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; s 22

s 22; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth

Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22; s 22

s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~**PROTECTED**~~

Hi s 22 and s 22

Our Post in London has confirmed there has been no announcement or confirmation by the UK Government of an appointment as at time of sending. (International Trade Minister Greg Hands

[said this morning in Parliament](#) that “no appointments have been confirmed”)

s 47E(d)

We have now received very similar QoNs from Senator Ayres addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment s 47C, s 47E(d)

Happy to discuss.

s 22

s 22

Europe Trade Section

**Europe & Latin America Division**  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

E | s 22  
T | s 22  
M | s 22

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**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Thursday, 3 September 2020 5:39 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; zz [External]

s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=OFFICIAL.Sensitive]

~~OFFICIAL.Sensitive~~

Hi s 22

Yes we'll look after questions 2 and 3.

Many thanks

s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Thursday, 3 September 2020 5:34 PM

**To:** s 22

**Cc:** s 22; s 22

s 22; s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=OFFICIAL.Sensitive]

~~OFFICIAL.Sensitive~~

Hi s 22

Just to clarify, is PM&C handling questions 2 and 3?

We can certainly check with Post about questions 1 and 3. There were no discussions that I'm aware of in Canberra.

s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Thursday, 3 September 2020 5:01 PM

**To:** s 22

**Cc:** s 22; s 22

s 22; zz [External] s 22

s 22

**Subject:** Request for assistance/input: Question on notice ~~[SEC- OFFICIAL.Sensitive]~~

~~OFFICIAL.Sensitive~~

Hi s 22

We'd be grateful for DFAT's assistance with answers for attached Question on Notice that we received today, specifically on questions 1 and 4. Grateful if you could also consult London Post on this.

Would you be able to get back to me by cob Monday (7 September)? Let me know if this is OK.

Regards

s 22

s 22

Adviser | Americas and Europe

International Division

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

p. s 22

e. s 22 | [www.pmc.gov.au](http://www.pmc.gov.au)

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**From:** s 22  
**To:** [International Executive](#)  
**Subject:** Draft International SE Topics [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Monday, 14 September 2020 5:38:11 PM  
**Attachments:** [20200908 - Draft International Topics.docx](#)

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~~OFFICIAL~~

Hi Exec,

Thanks for everyone's time today. Please find an updated topic list following our discussion.

A couple of things to note:

- s 22 [REDACTED]
- s 22 [REDACTED]
- The listing of a departmental brief for 'Candidacies and appointments' topic to include: s 22 [REDACTED] and Tony Abbott (which also remains a stand alone ministerial brief).
- s 22 [REDACTED]
- s 22 [REDACTED]
- s 22 [REDACTED]

Grateful of any suggested changes by early tomorrow if possible.

Many thanks

s 22 [REDACTED]

## INTERNATIONAL DIVISION

### Budget Estimates – October 2020

#### MINISTERIAL BRIEFS

s 22

5	UK trade appointment (Tony Abbott)	Darren Goldie

#### DEPARTMENTAL BRIEFS

	TOPIC	SPEAKER	INTL POC
s 22			
13.	Candidacies and appointments s 22 s 22 Tony Abbott)		s 22

s 22

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s 22

s 22

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**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]  
**Date:** Monday, 21 September 2020 1:55:18 PM

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~~PROTECTED~~

No worries, will keep in touch on our brief as it evolves.

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 September 2020 1:53 PM  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]

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~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

Yes, we will be doing an Estimates brief on this matter. Currently aiming to have something drafted by the end of the week. Sorry, nothing to share with you yet.

Regards

s 22

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 September 2020 1:44 PM  
**To:** s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]

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~~PROTECTED~~

Thanks s 22 . A further question - is your team also drafting an Estimates brief for the Abbott board of trade appointment?

If so, grateful if you could share anything you may have to hand to ensure alignment. We're being asked to move forward earlier than anticipated with our estimates briefing here.

Regards

s 22

---

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 September 2020 1:41 PM  
**To:** s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]

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~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

Apologies for the delay. I have spoken to Langman's office with a view to figuring out if he's cleared it s 22 . Anyway, I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

Regards

s 22

---

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 September 2020 1:39 PM  
**To:** s 22  
**Subject:** FW: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]

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~~PROTECTED~~



Hi s 22

Just forwarding this to you as well in case s 22 is not in the office today.

Regards

s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 21 September 2020 10:11 AM

**To:** s 22

**Cc:** s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~**PROTECTED**~~

Hi s 22

Just checking in on your QoN progress - did your Dep Sec clear it?

Regards

s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 14 September 2020 5:17 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22; Goldie, Darren <[Darren.Goldie@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Darren.Goldie@pmc.gov.au)>

**Cc:** s 22; Kevin Magee

<[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22

s 22; s 22; s 22

s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~**PROTECTED**~~

Many thanks for the update s 22. Yes please let us know when it's cleared.

Duplicate

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]  
**Date:** Tuesday, 22 September 2020 10:46:28 AM  
**Attachments:** [5. Tony Abbott.docx](#)

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**~~PROTECTED~~**

Hi s 22

Here's our current Estimates brief - EL2 cleared and about to go to AS for clearance. We're waiting on ABF to get back to us, but Home Affairs/AGD have taken a look.

Grateful if you could review and get back to me if any views/comments. It's due to FAS International cob today.

Regards

s 22

Duplicate

## **Background**

### **UK Board of Trade role**

The Hon Tony Abbott, former Prime Minister, was officially appointed as an adviser to the UK's Board of Trade on 4 September 2020.

The Board of Trade comprises senior figures from business, academia and government. Board members and advisers meet quarterly. The Board's primary role is to help the UK make a stronger case for free trade on the international stage, at a time of increased protectionism. The Board will engage extensively with industry, communities, farmers and consumer groups across the UK to help inform the development of an independent trade policy.

There has been widespread media coverage in the UK and Australia regarding Mr Abbott's appointment, with high interest from media outlets, politicians and commentators.

## Timeline

Date	Action
s 22	
<b>14 September 2020</b>	The scope of the 7 September FOI request to PM&C/DFAT is further refined to apply only to any correspondence from 1 January 2020 onwards. s 22
s 22	
<b>7 September 2020</b>	PM&C and DFAT receive an FOI request from s 47F s 47F at s 47G(1)(a), seeking any correspondence between Tony Abbott and PM&C/DFAT regarding the proposed role. s 22
<b>4 September 2020</b>	UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson defended Mr Abbott's appointment at a press conference, saying he (Mr Abbott) was "elected by the people of the great liberal democratic nation of Australia", which "speaks for itself". He said he "can't be expected" to agree with the views of all people working for the UK Government.
<b>4 September 2020</b>	Prominent UK actor Sir Ian McKellen released an open letter against Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, calling on Britain's arts community and environment and equality activists to support and sign it.

<b>4 September 2020</b>	The UK Government officially announced Mr Abbott's appointment as an adviser to the Board of Trade, along with 15 other appointments.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	UK Opposition Leader Sir Keir Starmer said "I don't think he (Mr Abbott) is the right man for the job" in a BBC interview.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	Tony Abbott met with UK Home Secretary Priti Patel.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	PM&C and DFAT received a Question on Notice from Senator Timothy Ayres asking about Australian Government involvement in Mr Abbott's appointment. A response is currently being prepared.
<b>1 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott appeared before the UK House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee. He gave evidence at an inquiry into "The UK's Role in Strengthening Multilateral Organisations".
<b>1 September 2020</b>	Tony Abbott gave a keynote speech in London at the Policy Exchange, a UK thinktank – titled "Australia and the Coronavirus Crisis".

s 22

<b>27 September 2020</b>	The Sydney Morning Herald reported multiple federal politicians questioning Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, including independent MP Zali Steggall, and Greens leader Adam Bandt, who called for Mr Abbott's parliamentary pension to be "stripped". The report noted at the time of filing that Mr Abbott was in Italy and was returning to London to give a keynote speech.
<b>26 August 2020</b>	The Prime Minister was asked in a media conference about reports of Mr Abbott's appointment. The Prime Minister responded that Mr Abbott would be a "good hire" for the UK Government.
<b>26 August 2020</b>	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> reported that Mr Abbott and UK Trade Secretary Liz Truss had breakfast together in London on 25 August 2020, reportedly "to confirm his new role advising the British Trade Board". s 22 s 22 s 22
<b>26 August 2020</b>	<i>The Sun</i> newspaper reported that Tony Abbott had been appointed as the "co-president" of the UK's Board of Trade.

<b>25 August 2020</b>	The High Commissioner to London hosted a breakfast attended by Tony Abbott and UK Trade Secretary Liz Truss.
<b>23 August 2020</b>	Mr Abbott was photographed attending the Wales Open golf tournament.

Rod Brazier First Assistant Secretary	International Division	<Office Phone>	<Mobile Phone>
s 22	Global Interests Branch	s 22	
Consultation	Attorney-General's Department	Department of Home Affairs	

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]  
**Date:** Tuesday, 22 September 2020 2:25:27 PM  
**Attachments:** [5\\_Tony Abbott.docx](#)

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~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

Here's the latest version of the brief - grateful if you could use this when sending to Post for review.

Cheers

s 22

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 22 September 2020 12:54 PM  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22 ; Olivia Williams  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

That's fine s 22, we'll let our FAS know Post is reviewing. Our Dep Sec has requested the brief by cob tomorrow. But I expect there will be multiple iterations in the lead-up to Estimates. I'll forward the AS-cleared version to you shortly - grateful if you could send that one to Post.

Cheers

s 22

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 22 September 2020 12:34 PM  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

Thanks for the opportunity to review. We don't have any comments ourselves but we think it is important to give our post in London a chance to review, particularly regarding the points on representations and resourcing.

Note your deadline to FAS International is COB today – would it be OK to include a note that London is reviewing? I expect they will come back overnight but not until well after COB.

Cheers

s 22

Duplicate

Hi s 22

Just forwarding this to you as well in case s 22 is not in the office today.

Regards

s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 21 September 2020 10:11 AM

**To:** s 22

**Cc:** s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice ~~[SEC-PROTECTED]~~

**PROTECTED**

Hi s 22

Just checking in on your QoN progress - did your Dep Sec clear it?

Regards

s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 14 September 2020 5:17 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22; Goldie, Darren <[Darren.Goldie@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Darren.Goldie@pmc.gov.au)>

**Cc:** s 22; Kevin Magee

<[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22

s 22; s 22

s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice ~~[SEC-PROTECTED]~~

**PROTECTED**

Many thanks for the update s 22. Yes please let us know when it's cleared.

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Monday, 14 September 2020 4:12 PM

**To:** s 22; s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 22; s 22

s 22; Kevin Magee <[Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Magee@dfat.gov.au)>; Elisabeth

Bowes <[Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Elisabeth.Bowes@dfat.gov.au)>; s 22 s 22

s 22; s 22

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice ~~[SEC-PROTECTED]~~

**~~PROTECTED~~**

Hi s 22

DFAT has received two FOI request. The first is focused on any assistance etc Mr Abbot may have received in relation to the position with the UK Board of Trade (same as the one you shared with us):

"Specifically, we seek any correspondence (electronic or otherwise) between Tony Abbott and DFAT/PM&C regarding his consideration of, and subsequent acceptance, of a role as a UK trade adviser."

s 22



s 47C, s 47E(d)

## **Background**

### **UK Board of Trade role**

The Hon Tony Abbott, former Prime Minister, was officially appointed as an adviser to the UK's Board of Trade on 4 September 2020.

The Board of Trade comprises senior figures from business, academia and government. Board members and advisers meet quarterly. The Board's primary role is to help the UK make a stronger case for free trade on the international stage, at a time of increased protectionism. The Board will engage extensively with industry, communities, farmers and consumer groups across the UK to help inform the development of an independent trade policy.

There has been widespread media coverage in the UK and Australia regarding Mr Abbott's appointment, with high interest from media outlets, politicians and commentators.

## Timeline

Date	Action
s 22	
<b>14 September 2020</b>	<p>The scope of the 7 September FOI request to PM&amp;C/DFAT is further refined to apply only to any correspondence from 1 January 2020 onwards.</p> <p>s 22</p>
s 22	
<b>7 September 2020</b>	<p>PM&amp;C and DFAT receive an FOI request from s 47F s 47F at s 47G(1)(a), seeking any correspondence between Tony Abbott and PM&amp;C/DFAT regarding the proposed role.</p> <p>s 22</p>
<b>4 September 2020</b>	<p>UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson defended Mr Abbott's appointment at a press conference, saying he (Mr Abbott) was "elected by the people of the great liberal democratic nation of Australia", which "speaks for itself". He said he "can't be expected" to agree with the views of all people working for the UK Government.</p>
<b>4 September 2020</b>	<p>Prominent UK actor Sir Ian McKellen released an open letter against Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, calling on Britain's arts community and environment and equality activists to support and sign it.</p>

<b>4 September 2020</b>	The UK Government officially announced Mr Abbott's appointment as an adviser to the Board of Trade, along with 15 other appointments.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	UK Opposition Leader Sir Keir Starmer said "I don't think he (Mr Abbott) is the right man for the job" in a BBC interview.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	Tony Abbott met with UK Home Secretary Priti Patel.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	PM&C and DFAT received a Question on Notice from Senator Timothy Ayres asking about Australian Government involvement in Mr Abbott's appointment. A response is currently being prepared.
<b>1 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott appeared (virtually) before the UK House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee. He gave evidence at an inquiry into "The UK's Role in Strengthening Multilateral Organisations".
<b>1 September 2020</b>	Tony Abbott gave a keynote speech in London at the Policy Exchange, a UK thinktank – titled "Australia and the Coronavirus Crisis".
s 22	
<b>27 September 2020</b>	The Sydney Morning Herald reported multiple federal politicians questioning Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, including independent MP Zali Steggall, and Greens leader Adam Bandt, who called for Mr Abbott's parliamentary pension to be "stripped". The report noted at the time of filing that Mr Abbott was in Italy and was returning to London to give a keynote speech.
<b>26 August 2020</b>	The Prime Minister was asked in a media conference about reports of Mr Abbott's appointment. The Prime Minister responded that Mr Abbott would be a "good hire" for the UK Government.
<b>26 August 2020</b>	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> reported that Mr Abbott and UK Trade Secretary Liz Truss had breakfast together in London on 25 August 2020, reportedly "to confirm his new role advising the British Trade Board" s 22 s 22
<b>26 August 2020</b>	<i>The Sun</i> newspaper reported that Tony Abbott had been appointed as the "co-president" of the UK's Board of Trade.

<b>25 August 2020</b>	[Not public] The High Commissioner to London hosted a breakfast attended by Tony Abbott and UK Trade Secretary Liz Truss.
<b>23 August 2020</b>	Mr Abbott was photographed attending the Wales Open golf tournament.

Rod Brazier First Assistant Secretary	International Division	s 22 XXXX	04XX XXX XXX
s 22	Global Interests Branch	s 22	
Consultation	Attorney-General's Department	Department of Home Affairs	DFAT

### **Key Documents**

Attachment A	"Tony Abbott's appointment to Britain's Board of Trade prompts questions from Labor party about foreign interference", ABC News, 5 September 2020
Attachment B	"Government announces new Board of Trade", UK Government press release, 4 September 2020
Attachment C	Mr Abbott's evidence to the UK Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry into "The UK's role in strengthening multilateral organisations", 1 September 2020
Attachment D	"Abbott's new British trade role called into question as gig exposes European jaunt", Sydney Morning Herald, 27 August 2020

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]  
**Date:** Wednesday, 23 September 2020 11:53:27 AM

---

~~PROTECTED~~

Thanks s 22

Cheers

s 22

---

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 23 September 2020 11:48 AM  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]

---

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

Sorry, had a response to you typed up but failed to clear the final hurdle and press send before I got started on something else. Post has no comments, so you're good to go from our perspective.

Cheers

s 22

---

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 23 September 2020 11:46 AM  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 s 22  
 s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
 s 22

---

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]

---

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

Any word from Post on the Estimates brief overnight?

Cheers

s 22

---

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 22 September 2020 3:40 PM  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22  
 s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
 s 22

---

**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC=PROTECTED]

---

~~PROTECTED~~

Thanks s 22 . I've forwarded this to post and will revert with any comments ASAP.

Cheers

s 22

---

**From:** [Goldie, Darren](#)  
**To:** [Brazier, Roderick](#)  
**Subject:** FW: FOR ACTION - new Parliamentary Question on Notice 1887 - United Kingdom Board of Trade Joint President candidacy [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Wednesday, 23 September 2020 4:31:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [QoN 1887 - UK Board of Trade - final cleared.docx](#)

---

~~**OFFICIAL**~~

Rod

For your awareness. I discussed this response with Caroline; I wanted to ensure she was comfortable with the approach s 47C, s 47E(d)

Golds

**Darren Goldie** | Assistant Secretary  
 Global Interests Branch | National Security Division  
 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
 m. s 22

---

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 23 September 2020 4:22 PM  
**To:** Goldie, Darren <Darren.Goldie@pmc.gov.au>; s 22  
 s 22  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** RE: FOR ACTION - new Parliamentary Question on Notice 1887 - United Kingdom Board of Trade Joint President candidacy [SEC=OFFICIAL]

~~**OFFICIAL**~~

Hi all

Please see attached the finalised QoN, cleared by Darren. s 47E(d)

s 47E(d)

Regards  
 s 22

---

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Thursday, 3 September 2020 1:50 PM  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** RE: FOR ACTION - new Parliamentary Question on Notice 1887 - United Kingdom Board of Trade Joint President candidacy [SEC=OFFICIAL]

~~**OFFICIAL**~~

Yep, thanks s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Thursday, 3 September 2020 1:43 PM

**To:** s 22

**Cc:** s 22

**Subject:** FW: FOR ACTION - new Parliamentary Question on Notice 1887 - United Kingdom Board of Trade Joint President candidacy [SEC=OFFICIAL]

~~OFFICIAL~~

Hi s 22

Just wanted to double check that your team would handle this one?

Cheers

s 22

---

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Thursday, 3 September 2020 1:22 PM

**To:** s 22

**Subject:** FW: FOR ACTION - new Parliamentary Question on Notice 1887 - United Kingdom Board of Trade Joint President candidacy [SEC=OFFICIAL]

~~OFFICIAL~~

---

**From:** Questions on Notice <[QON@pmc.gov.au](mailto:QON@pmc.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Thursday, 3 September 2020 12:54 PM

**To:** Brazier, Roderick <[Roderick.Brazier@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Roderick.Brazier@pmc.gov.au)>; Goldie, Darren <[Darren.Goldie@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Darren.Goldie@pmc.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Questions on Notice <[QON@pmc.gov.au](mailto:QON@pmc.gov.au)>; s 22  
s 22; MacDowell, Brendan <[Brendan.MacDowell@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Brendan.MacDowell@pmc.gov.au)>;  
Foster, Stephanie <[Stephanie.Foster@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Stephanie.Foster@pmc.gov.au)>; DLO <[dlo@pmc.gov.au](mailto:dlo@pmc.gov.au)>; DLO Morton  
<[DLOMorton@pmc.gov.au](mailto:DLOMorton@pmc.gov.au)>; s 22; Pullen, Victoria  
<[Victoria.Pullen@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Victoria.Pullen@pmc.gov.au)>; s 22; s 22  
s 22; Millar, Caroline <[Caroline.Millar@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Caroline.Millar@pmc.gov.au)>; s 22  
s 22

**Subject:** FOR ACTION - new Parliamentary Question on Notice 1887 - United Kingdom Board of Trade Joint President candidacy [SEC=OFFICIAL]

~~OFFICIAL~~

Good afternoon,

Please find attached for International Division's action Senate Question on Notice 1887 asked of

the Prime Minister on 3 September 2020.

The response is due for tabling on **2 October 2020**.

s 47E(d)



Kind regards

s 22

Ministerial Correspondence and Briefs Section | Ministerial & Parliamentary Support Branch  
Ministerial Support Division | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
p. s 22 | e. s 22 | w. [www.pmc.gov.au](http://www.pmc.gov.au)

One National Circuit Barton ACT 2600 | PO Box 6500 CANBERRA ACT 2600



**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]  
**Date:** Thursday, 24 September 2020 1:49:44 PM  
**Attachments:** [QoN 1887 - UK Board of Trade - final cleared.docx](#)

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22 and s 22  
 See attached our cleared QoN response s 47E(d)  
 Regards  
 s 22

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 September 2020 2:50 PM  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22  
 I've now confirmed that Dep Sec Langman has cleared the QON response. s 47E(d)  
 s 47E(d). Here it is.  
 Regards  
 s 22  
 Assistant Director  
 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Europe Trade, UK and Ireland Branch  
 Europe & Latin America Division

E | s 22  
 T | s 22  
 F | s 22  
 I | [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au)

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 September 2020 10:32 AM  
**To:** s 22  
**Subject:** Fwd: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice [SEC-PROTECTED]

~~PROTECTED~~

s 22, would you mind checking on this for me please. I think CL was signing off last week. s 22

~~PROTECTED~~

duplicate

**From:** S 22  
**To:** S 22  
**Subject:** FW: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice ~~[SEC-PROTECTED]~~  
**Date:** Friday, 2 October 2020 11:24:15 AM  
**Attachments:** [Correspondence with Tony Abbott on his appointment as a UK trade adviser.msg](#)

---

~~**PROTECTED**~~

Duplicate

**From:** s 47F  
**To:** [FOI](#); [FOI](#)  
**Subject:** Correspondence with Tony Abbott on his appointment as a UK trade adviser  
**Date:** Monday, 7 September 2020 8:31:32 AM

---

To the FOI officers,

I am sending this request to both DFAT and PM&C as both may be relevant in respect to this issue.

This email seeks information under the FOI Act (1982).

Specifically, we seek any correspondence (electronic or otherwise) between Tony Abbott and DFAT/PM&C regarding his consideration of, and subsequent acceptance, of a role as a UK trade adviser.

Thanks and best regards, s 47F

s 47F, s 47G(1)(a)



**From:** s 22 [REDACTED]  
**To:** s 22 [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: Request for assistance/input: Question on notice ~~[SEC-PROTECTED]~~  
**Date:** Wednesday, 7 October 2020 11:22:37 AM

---

~~**PROTECTED**~~

[Last chain on this.](#)

Duplicate

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Consultation on Senate Estimates Brief ~~[SEC-~~OFFICIAL~~Sensitive]~~  
**Date:** Wednesday, 7 October 2020 11:24:13 AM  
**Attachments:** [Senate QoN - UK Board of Trade - Final.pdf](#)

---

~~**OFFICIAL-Sensitive**~~

s 22

Further to the below, please find attached the final approved answer to the Senate QoN regarding Abbott's appointment.

s 22

---

**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 7 October 2020 10:43 AM  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** Consultation on Senate Estimates Brief ~~[SEC-~~OFFICIAL~~Sensitive]~~

~~**OFFICIAL-Sensitive**~~

Hi s 22 , s 22

I believe you have been talking to my colleague s 22 regarding Senate Estimates preparation – specifically re Tony Abbott's Board of Trade appointment.

Our Ministerial brief has been substantially revised as it has gone through the approval process, and as such we would value your re-clearance of the attached. We would like to draw your particular attention to the proposed answer to questions about the breakfast held by the High Commissioner. How well is this aligned with the draft DFAT response?

With many thanks

s 22 | Adviser  
 International Division | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
 p. s 22 | s 22  
 e. s 22 | w. [www.pmc.gov.au](http://www.pmc.gov.au)  
 One National Circuit Barton ACT 2600 | PO Box 6500 CANBERRA ACT 2600

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET****Minister representing the Prime Minister****SENATE QUESTION**

United Kingdom Board of Trade Joint President Candidacy

**Question No. 1887**

**Senator Timothy Ayres:** asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister on 3 September 2020—

With reference to the candidacy of former Prime Minister, Mr Tony Abbott, for the role of Joint President of the United Kingdom Board of Trade:

1. Have any discussions taken place between representatives of the Australian Government and the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy in advance of the announcement of the appointment; if so, when and with whom did the discussions take place.
2. Has the Prime Minister made any representations to the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, on how many occasions, when and by whom were representations made.
3. Has the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet made any representations to the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, on how many occasions, when and by whom were they made.
4. Have any Australian Government resources been applied to support Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, what resources have been applied and what has been the total cost of supporting Mr Abbott's candidacy.

**Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann** - The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the Honourable Senator's question:

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is not aware of any discussions, representations or resources in support of the candidacy of former Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott for the role of Joint President of the United Kingdom Board of Trade.

Appointments to the United Kingdom Board of Trade are a matter for the government of the United Kingdom.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET**

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; [Kevin Magee](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Consultation on Senate Estimates Brief ~~[SEE - OFFICIAL Sensitive]~~ ~~[SEE - PROTECTED]~~  
**Date:** Wednesday, 7 October 2020 12:57:41 PM  
**Attachments:** [PMC Estimates Brief - Tony Abbott appointment \(003\).docx](#)

---

~~PROTECTED~~

Hi s 22

Just a slight tweak to the point on the breakfast. We spoke to Post about this and they said it was not a particularly formal event, s 47C, s 47E(d)

Thanks for checking.

s 22

Duplicate



s 47C, s 47E(d)

## **Background**

### **UK Board of Trade role**

The Board of Trade comprises senior figures from business, academia and government. Board members and advisers meet quarterly. The Board's primary role is to help the UK make a stronger case for free trade on the international stage, at a time of increased protectionism. The Board will engage extensively with industry, communities, farmers and consumer groups across the UK to help inform the

development of an independent trade policy. In the official media release announcing the Board appointments, the Department of International Trade noted that advisers to the Board will have no direct role in striking trade deals.

## **Timeline**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>2 October 2020</b>	PM&C responded to the 7 September FOI request with a “no documents” decision.
s 22	
<b>14 September 2020</b>	[To be updated prior to Estimates hearing] The scope of the 7 September FOI request to PM&C/DFAT was further refined to apply only to any correspondence from 1 January 2020 onwards.
s 22	
s 22	
<b>7 September 2020</b>	[Will be updated prior to Estimates hearing] PM&C and DFAT received an FOI request, seeking any correspondence between Mr Abbott and PM&C/DFAT regarding the proposed UK Board of Trade role. Darren Goldie, Assistant Secretary, Global Interests Branch, is the delegate for this request.
<b>5 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott released a statement regarding his appointment, saying he “looks forward to playing a constructive role facilitating new trade deals between Britain and other countries, including Australia.”
s 22	

<b>4 September 2020</b>	UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson defended Mr Abbott's appointment at a press conference, saying he (Mr Abbott) was "elected by the people of the great liberal democratic nation of Australia", which "speaks for itself". He said he "can't be expected" to agree with the views of all people working for the UK Government.
<b>4 September 2020</b>	Prominent UK actor Sir Ian McKellen released an open letter against Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, calling on Britain's arts community and environment and equality activists to support and sign it.
<b>4 September 2020</b>	The UK Government announced Mr Abbott's appointment as an adviser to the Board of Trade, along with 15 other appointments. The official media release notes that advisers appointed to the Board will have no direct role in striking trade deals.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	UK Opposition Leader Sir Keir Starmer said "I don't think he (Mr Abbott) is the right man for the job" in a BBC interview.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott met with UK Home Secretary Priti Patel.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	PM&C and DFAT received a Question on Notice from Senator Timothy Ayres asking about Australian Government involvement in Mr Abbott's appointment. A response is currently being prepared s 47E(d) s 47E(d)
<b>1 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott appeared (virtually) before the UK House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee. He gave evidence at an inquiry into "The UK's Role in Strengthening Multilateral Organisations".
<b>1 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott gave a keynote speech in London at the Policy Exchange, a UK thinktank – titled "Australia and the Coronavirus Crisis".

<b>27 August 2020</b>	The <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> reported multiple federal politicians questioning Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, including independent MP Zali Steggall and Greens leader Adam Bandt, who called for Mr Abbott's parliamentary pension to be "stripped". The report noted at the time of filing that Mr Abbott was in Italy and was returning to London to give a keynote speech.
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<b>26 August 2020</b>	The Prime Minister was asked in a media conference about reports of Mr Abbott's appointment. The Prime Minister responded "A good hire! I think that's a good hire!" s 22 s 22
<b>26 August 2020</b>	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> reported that Mr Abbott and UK Secretary of State for International Trade Liz Truss had breakfast together in London on 25 August 2020, reportedly "to confirm his new role advising the British Trade Board". s 22 s 22 The article reported a Government spokesman (unidentified) as saying "the Australian Government was not made aware of the appointment until they read about it in the British press".
<b>26 August 2020</b>	<i>The Sun</i> newspaper reported that Tony Abbott had been appointed as the "co-president" of the UK's Board of Trade.
<b>25 August 2020</b>	[Post's hosting of breakfast not public] The High Commissioner to London hosted a breakfast attended by Mr Abbott and UK Secretary of State for International Trade Liz Truss.
<b>23 August 2020</b>	Mr Abbott was photographed attending the Wales Open golf tournament.

Rod Brazier First Assistant Secretary	International Division	s 22	s 22
s 22	Global Interests Branch	s 22	
Consultation	Attorney-General's Department	Department of Home Affairs	DFAT (including London Post)

### **Key Documents**

Attachment A	"Tony Abbott's appointment to Britain's Board of Trade prompts questions from Labor party about foreign interference", ABC News, 5 September 2020
Attachment B	Statement from the Hon Tony Abbott AC on appointment to the UK Board of Trade, 5 September 2020
Attachment C	"Government announces new Board of Trade", UK Government press release, 4 September 2020

- Attachment D Mr Abbott's evidence to the UK Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry into "The UK's role in strengthening multilateral organisations", 1 September 2020
- Attachment E "Abbott's new British trade role called into question as gig exposes European jaunt", Sydney Morning Herald, 27 August 2020

THE HON TONY ABBOTT AC

5 September 2020

**STATEMENT ON APPOINTMENT AS ADVISER TO UK BOARD OF TRADE**

I'm pleased to have been announced as an adviser to the reconstituted UK Board of Trade and look forward to playing a constructive role facilitating new trade deals between Britain and other countries, including Australia.

A UK-Australia trade deal, maximising the movement of goods, services and people is clearly in the best interests of both our countries.

It's important for the wider world that Britain make the most of its post-Brexit opportunities and I am proud to be playing a part.

My government finalised trade deals between Australia and China, Japan and Korea. I'm looking forward to bringing that expertise to bear as Britain works towards mutually beneficial improvements with its major trading partners.

The world especially needs arrangements that boost prosperity at a time like this and I am only too keen to help.



1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
2. Business and industry (<https://www.gov.uk/business-and-industry>)
3. Trade and investment (<https://www.gov.uk/business-and-industry/trade-and-investment>)
4. Exporting (<https://www.gov.uk/business-and-industry/exporting>)

Press release

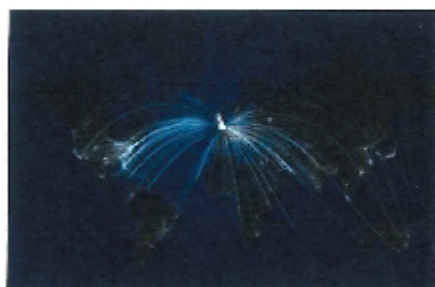
## Government announces new Board of Trade

New Board of Trade announced – comprised of key figures from politics, academia and industry.

Published 4 September 2020

From:

Department for International Trade (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-trade>) and The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/ellizabeth-truss>)



The Department for International Trade has today (Friday 4 September) announced its new advisers to the Board of Trade (<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/board-of-trade>), comprising of senior figures from business, academia and government.

Board members and advisers will meet quarterly and use their influence to help Britain make a stronger case for free trade on the international stage, helping the government forge a stronger global consensus for free trade at a time of increased protectionism.

The Board will engage extensively with industry, communities, farmers and consumer groups across the UK, to ensure a range of voices are heard as the UK develops its independent trade policy. The Board will also encourage more businesses across the UK regions and nations to boost their international trade.

The new advisers to the Board are announced at an important time for UK trade policy and as negotiations with the US, Japan, Australia and New Zealand enter their crucial latter stages – although advisers to the Board will have no direct role in striking trade deals.

The Board will represent a range of views to help in its advisory function, promoting free and fair trade and advising on UK trade policy to the International Trade Secretary.

Secretary of State for International Trade, Liz Truss said:

The new Board of Trade will play an important role in helping Britain make the case for free and fair trade across the UK and around the world.

At a time of increased protectionism and global insecurity, it's vital that the UK is a strong voice for open markets and that we play a meaningful role in reshaping global trading rules alongside like-minded countries.

The new Board will help us do that, bringing together a diverse group of people who share Britain's belief in free enterprise, democracy, and high standards and rules-based trade.

Dr Linda Yueh, economist at Oxford University, London Business School and LSE IDEAS, said:

I am honoured to advise on trade policy at this important time. Trade will play a key role in supporting the UK's economic growth.

I look forward to working with other advisers to bring our expertise to the Board.

Further information:

Membership of the Board of Trade is restricted to Privy Counsellors.

The President of the Board of trade is:

- (i) Secretary of State for Department of International Trade
- (ii) Deputy President, Marcus Fysh MP

### **Advisers to the Board**

The advisers are:

- Secretary of State for Scotland
- Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
- Secretary of State for Wales
- Minister for Trade Policy (invited when relevant to Ministerial portfolio)
- Minister for Investment (invited when relevant to Ministerial portfolio)
- Minister for Exports (invited when relevant to Ministerial portfolio)
- Minister for International Trade (invited when relevant to Ministerial portfolio)
- The Hon Tony Abbott
- Karen Betts
- Anne Boden MBE
- Daniel Hannan
- Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt
- Emma Howard Boyd
- Michael Liebreich
- Rt Hon the Lord Mayor of the City of London, William Russell
- Dr Linda Yueh

Published 4 September 2020

**Explore the topic**





HOUSE OF COMMONS

## Foreign Affairs Committee

### Oral evidence: The UK's Role in Strengthening Multilateral Organisations, HC 513

Tuesday 1 September 2020

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 1 September 2020.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Tom Tugendhat (Chair); Chris Bryant; Alicia Kearns; Stewart Malcolm McDonald; Andrew Rosindell; Bob Seely; Henry Smith; Royston Smith; Graham Stringer; Claudia Webbe; Neil Coyle.

Questions 37–93

#### Witnesses

I: Lord Bowness, Vice-president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Chair of the Sub-Committee on Rules of Procedure and Working Practices, Member of Delegation, Conservative member of the House of Lords, Alex T Johnson, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Helsinki Commission for the 116th Congress, and Dr Neil Melvin, Director International Security Studies at the Royal United Services Institute.

II: Hon. Tony Abbott AC, 28th Prime Minister of Australia.

Written evidence from witnesses:

—Lord Bowness

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/9598/html/>



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Examination of Witness

Witness: Tony Abbott.

**Q58 Chair:** I now welcome the 28th Prime Minister of Australia, the hon. Tony Abbott, who has kindly joined us this afternoon to talk about multilaterals, a subject on which he is uniquely skilled to answer questions. I hope he will forgive us if we spend 10 minutes—I will limit it to 10 minutes—on the new post he holds on behalf of the British people. We will keep it strictly to 10 minutes and then come back to the point that Mr Abbott kindly agreed to speak to us on.

**Tony Abbott:** Thank you, Tom. It is nice to be with you. I trust that the technology is working and that you can hear me and see me.

**Chair:** It is working perfectly. Good to have you with us.

**Tony Abbott:** I cannot see you, but I can hear you loud and clear. I am not sure that there is a lot that I can say on this story that appeared in *The Sun* last week. Yes, I have had some discussions with members of the British Government, and I am more than happy to help, but there is nothing official as yet.

All I can say at this time is that, as far as I am concerned, it would be in the interest of both Britain and Australia to conclude a full and comprehensive free trade deal between our two countries as quickly as possible, involving essentially zero tariffs and quotas on goods, mutual recognition of standards and qualifications and free movement of people, perhaps subject to some kind of an annual quota, for work, not welfare. Speaking generally, freer trade between countries with comparable standards of living and like-mindedness will certainly be in the interests of those countries and the interest of the wider world. But I am not sure how much more specific I can be, given that, as I say, nothing has been officially decided as yet.

**Chair:** Given that this is not an official appointment as yet, and therefore there is no specific thing to respond to, does anyone have any immediate questions on this, before we get on to the meat of this afternoon's session? Mr Stringer, you start and then I will come on to Mr Bryant.

**Q59 Graham Stringer:** It is very good of you to be here this afternoon, Mr Abbott. I have two simple questions. If you were to take a position with the Board of Trade, would you need the Australian Government's permission to take that position? I agree with the points you made in your opening remarks, and I think most people would. One comment was attributed to you earlier is that "free trade is too important to leave to the officials." If that is a fair comment, could you give us some evidence on that and how it would affect your approach to being a member of the Board of Trade?



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**Tony Abbott:** If I may, I would be doing this as a private citizen and I do not imagine that there would be any requirement for Australian Government approval. That said, when there was this report in one of the London newspapers, my friend and colleague, Prime Minister Scott Morrison was asked about it, and he said it was a "good hire", so I presume that is a general commendation, if I may say so.

On the other question, it is important that all things that are done in our name—and free trade agreements are negotiated by Governments in the name of the peoples of the relevant countries—have to be fully overseen by the elected and accountable Government and the elected and accountable Ministers. It is absolutely critical that that happens. That is not simply the case with free trade deals; it is obviously the case just at the moment with health regulations. Officials advise; Ministers decide. We can never put ourselves entirely into the hands of unelected and unaccountable people when it comes to very important decisions impacting dramatically on the daily lives of our citizens.

So, yes, officials have a very important part to play—in the big three free trade deals that my Government finalised, with China, Japan and South Korea, the officials were absolutely magnificent. They were driven, and sometimes driven hard by the then Australian Trade Minister, Andrew Robb, and certainly I did quite a bit myself to ensure that we did not get bogged down in a whole lot of technicalities. Nevertheless, I sometimes think that officials sometimes prefer the process to the outcome, but in the end the whole point of the process is to get the best possible outcome, often as quickly as you can.

Q60 **Chris Bryant:** Thanks very much, Mr Abbott, and it is good to have you with us. May I just check: what country are you in at the moment?

**Tony Abbott:** I am lucky enough to be in London just now.

Q61 **Chris Bryant:** How did you manage to get round the fact that the Australian health website said that Australia's borders are closed?

**Tony Abbott:** You can get permission to leave the country and I applied in the ordinary way, through the website, providing the reasons why I wished to leave Australia for 10 days, and in due course permission was duly granted. I should point out that this is an entirely privately funded trip. When I go back to Australia, I would expect, like all incoming travellers, to be subjected to two weeks' hotel quarantine, which, naturally enough, I will personally pay for.

Q62 **Chris Bryant:** It is just that there are a lot of British people who are still stuck in Australia and are not allowed to leave, so it looks a bit as if there is one rule for one set of people and another for others.

**Tony Abbott:** I would certainly be disappointed if that were ever the case. My understanding is that all people in Australia—well, certainly Australian citizens—who wish to leave have got to go through this process, the same process that I went through. My understanding is that people who are normally resident in other countries are generally permitted to leave; that



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is my understanding. You probably should seek further and better particulars from Australia House on that, but my understanding is that if you are a British subject, you can go, if you are normally resident in Britain—

**Q63 Chris Bryant:** You said that you have been in discussions about a job with Government Ministers here—

**Tony Abbott:** I think I would call it a role rather than a job.

**Q64 Chris Bryant:** What is the distinction that you are drawing? What is this role, then? Give it a title, give it a pay grade, give it a—

**Tony Abbott:** Again, I really think that that is something that is better addressed to Ministers in the Government. It is something that is not yet official and I really do not think there is anything more I can say until things have been decided.

**Q65 Chris Bryant:** Did they first approach you about this role, or did you see an advert in *The Guardian* or something?

**Tony Abbott:** I am just not going to go into this any further.

**Q66 Chris Bryant:** Do you know what status you would have? For instance, would you have a diplomatic passport? Would you be covered by the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations? Would you have dual citizenship or Australian citizenship only?

**Tony Abbott:** Again, I am not going to go into this any further, save to add two things. First, I do not normally read *The Guardian*; I am sure it is a wonderful newspaper, but it is not my staple reading. Secondly, as a former Australian Prime Minister, as luck would have it, I do have a diplomatic passport.

**Chris Bryant:** You keep that for life, do you, in Australia?

**Tony Abbott:** That is the rule in Australia, yes.

**Chair:** We are going off topic.

**Q67 Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Thank you for joining us, Mr Abbott. The policies that the Government decide to pursue are as important, I guess, as the people who join and run the Government. You said in March 2017 that, when it came to trade deals you had overseen, particularly with China, as Prime Minister, labour and environmental standards were “peripheral issues”. Will that be the approach you take in any future role you may have as a trade envoy of some kind with the British Government?

**Tony Abbott:** Obviously, if I was doing some work to advise and perhaps facilitate in this area, in the end decisions would be, as they quite properly should be, for the Minister, for the Government and perhaps for the Parliament, but I should—

**Q68 Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Do you believe they are peripheral issues? What do you think now?



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**Tony Abbott:** Certainly, in respect of the United Kingdom and Australia, labour standards and environmental standards are very comparable.

Q69 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Do you think they are peripheral issues, Mr Abbott, if you are negotiating, say, with China?

**Tony Abbott:** The point I make is that if, for argument's sake, you are talking about Australia and the United Kingdom, we have great respect for workers' rights, as we should. We certainly want to see a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, and I certainly want to see my country, and I am sure Britain as well, a high-wage society into the future. We have, I think, the very best of environmental standards—certainly our air quality, our water quality and our protection of flora and fauna in Australia are absolutely second to none, as I think they are here in Britain.

Q70 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Are you familiar with QAnon, Mr Abbott?

**Tony Abbott:** I'm afraid I am not, but I am sure you will enlighten me.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** It is a far-right conspiracy theorist group. I am curious why, this morning, in a speech you gave here in London, you used their language when you referred to a "health dictatorship". Why did you use that term, and what exactly is a health dictatorship?

**Tony Abbott:** The reference was to the situation currently pertaining in the Australian state of Victoria where, under a series of emergency and disaster declarations, homes can be entered at any time, persons detained at any time and the ordinary law of the land suspended, without further reference to Parliament. These are very draconian restrictions. They are being put in place—

Q71 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** To save lives, presumably.

**Tony Abbott:** For our own good, in the judgment of the Victorian Premier and the Victorian Government, but they are very draconian restrictions. However—

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I suppose I just hope you do not add healthcare to the list of peripheral issues.

Q/2 **Chair:** Order. I am going to stop that there. Forgive me; frankly I do not see the relevance to the work of the Foreign Affairs Committee on that. Mr Abbott has kindly agreed to speak on wider issues.

**Tony Abbott:** It brings back happy memories to see this kind of banter across the parliamentary Chamber floor.

**Chair:** I don't think you need any protecting, Mr Abbott, frankly—you have been through the rough and tumble more than most. Can I get back to what you were invited to speak about, which was multinational diplomacy?

**Claudia Webbe:** Is it possible to come in there, Tom?

**Chair:** Very briefly, Ms Webbe, if it really is specific to the role of the Foreign Affairs Committee and not something on a wider issue that Mr



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Abbott really isn't here to answer for.

**Q73 Claudia Webber:** It is an important question. Welcome, Mr Abbott. In 2012, you said that men are by physiology or temperament more adapted than women to exercise authority or to issue command. Can you tell us whether you stand by that view, and will you have any difficulty accepting the authority of Liz Truss if you are working under her command at the Board of Trade?

**Tony Abbott:** I am not sure I ever did say that. If you would like to privately provide the Committee secretariat with your source, I would happily have a look at it, but it does not sound like anything I have said.

**Q74 Chair:** Could we move on, please, and focus on what we actually need to ask about? I will begin, if I may.

We recognise there is a fine line between legitimate influence and unacceptable interference leading to abuse or misuse by member states within multilaterals. What vulnerabilities to abuse and misuse do you recognise in particular multilaterals at the current time? I am particularly thinking of some of the examples that your successor Government, Mr Morrison's Government, has called out in things like the World Health Organisation. What other issues can you think of where the multilateral system is vulnerable?

**Tony Abbott:** The multilateral system is there for very good reasons. It has evolved as part of the post-war settlement, which was essentially authored by the United States and the United Kingdom, and its underpinnings are the underpinnings that we would all respect and support: the free and equal association of sovereign states, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and so on. I am broadly supportive of the multilateral system. I just make this observation, though: the strength, freedom, fairness and cohesion of countries such as Australia and, I am sure, the United Kingdom do not depend on those multilateral entities. Given that the multilateral entities are often dominated by countries with quite different standards, I would like to see countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and other like-minded countries playing a strong role in them, but in the end it is our standards, our ways and our values that we have to act by. That would be my general observation.

The point to be made about the World Health Organisation is that it does seem, on the basis of information that has been widely circulated, that the Chinese authorities first tried to repress information coming out of Wuhan, including information that was being circulated on Chinese social media; second, were slow to inform the World Health Organisation of exactly what was going on; and third, have resisted any attempts to get them to come clean about what exactly happened that has given us this dreadful scourge. This is not so much criticism of the World Health Organisation as some observations about the sorts of things that are all too common in authoritarian countries. Nevertheless, it is important that where something deeply sub-optimal has happened, countries such as Australia and Britain call out other countries in these forums. Obviously, it was something of a diplomatic coup by the Morrison Government to have secured World



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Health Organisation agreement to this comprehensive investigation into the outbreak of the coronavirus. Let's hope that China co-operates fully with that inquiry.

- Q75 Henry Smith:** Welcome, Mr Abbott. It is good to have you in front of us today. You are quite right to say that it was a significant achievement of the current Australian Government to get that review, and I suspect it will find, as you have alluded to, that there was a cover-up by the Chinese regime in Beijing over the seriousness of the early stages of what became the covid-19 pandemic. This Committee has produced a report on reform of global health. Do you think that, subject to this review, it may well be that the World Health Organisation needs to be significantly reformed so that it is not so subject to political interference, or that a new body—particularly between countries that are not dictatorships among the democracies—could be formed?

**Tony Abbott:** I think there should be the strongest possible co-operation between like-minded democracies. As far as is humanly possible, the best standards should be applicable to the workings of these multinational entities. I would certainly encourage the Governments of Britain, Australia and other like-minded, pluralist democracies around the world to put their heads together on what would be a suitable range of reforms for the World Health Organisation. Let's hope at least some of those might be adopted. I would have thought that the biggest practical difficulty is the lack of ability of the World Health Organisation to send inspectors into countries where there are apparent problems, to get quickly to the bottom of what might be going on. I imagine that there might be some resistance to any such proposal from some Governments, but an effective World Health Organisation really does need the power to get down on the ground and to see exactly what is happening, so that you are not as reliant on reports from Governments that may have a vested interest in minimising problems or even covering them up.

**Chair:** Do you want to come back on that, Henry?

**Henry Smith:** No, that was comprehensive. My appreciation.

- Q76 Royston Smith:** Thank you for joining us today, Mr Abbott. We are all very grateful to you, and I am sorry we went a bit off piste to start with. I want to bring it back to the reasons that you are here. Which multilaterals do you see as key in the coming years, and what do you see as the UK's role in driving change within them?

**Tony Abbott:** All of them have an important role. I was looking through the list of multilateral organisations to which Britain is a member and a key contributor, and it's a pretty impressive list. There was the World Health Organisation—around £20 million a year. There was NATO—around £380 million a year. There was the Council of Europe—around £30 million a year. I presume that won't have to be spent come next year. Then there was the Commonwealth, with just £6 million or £7 million a year, which was a little surprising and a little disappointing. I know the Commonwealth is a large and at times unwieldy entity, but it is nevertheless an entity that



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owes its origin to Britain's global role. Without wanting to pump up the Commonwealth's tyres too much, it did surprise me a little that the contribution, and presumably therefore the emphasis that Britain places on so many other organisations, so far exceeded the Commonwealth.

- Q77 Andrew Rosindell:** Good afternoon, Mr Abbott. Welcome to our meeting. Thank you for your friendship to the United Kingdom over many years. We appreciate everything you are doing to support us during this transition period, as we leave the European Union, and we hope you will work with us in the future.

You will know that the new Leader of the Opposition in Canada, Mr Eric O'Toole, said: "we fought and died together. We need to do more with our best friends on the world stage". Would you agree with that? Do you think that Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand—all the English-speaking countries—have so much in common and should work together in many areas and seize the opportunities that we have, now that Britain has left the European Union?

**Tony Abbott:** I would, and I suppose the Five Eyes partnership has been a wonderful, practical example of all the major English-speaking democracies working together for the good of the wider world throughout the post-war period. If anything, the Five Eyes partnership has become even more important in recent years than it has been at times over the last seven decades. I do think it is very important.

I should probably say, though, that while I think the Anglosphere countries can and should work in the closest possible harmony—whatever political differences there are between us, in practical terms we are family—I would not want other like-minded democracies to feel excluded. Countries such as Japan, Singapore and Israel, for instance, are not Anglosphere countries but have strategic skin in the game and are extremely like-minded with the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and other countries.

- Q78 Andrew Rosindell:** On that very point, as you arrived at Heathrow, you would have seen for the first time the flags of Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Japan. That is a great indication of how Britain is changing its attitude and becoming more global, not just Eurocentric. Would you agree with the position of the Government here in the UK that we need a clean break from the European Union, and that to trade and co-operate globally we need to be independent of their tentacles and their control? Would you support that view? If so, do you feel that we have many more opportunities to work within the Commonwealth family and the wider world, as you have just mentioned?

**Tony Abbott:** I would probably not use the same terminology, with respect, but I certainly think that Britain should not fear a so-called hard exit. Australia has been, for many years, doing what is currently \$100 billion-worth of trade annually with countries of the EU on a no-deal basis. Britain currently does a shade over 50% of its trade with countries outside the EU on a no-deal basis. I certainly hope that the EU comes to its senses and offers Britain at least a Canada-style free trade deal. I certainly hope





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that is the case, but no one in Britain should be too angst-ridden about a so-called hard Brexit, because Britain is already doing so much on a no-deal basis anyway.

The other point that I hope you will forgive me for making in this context is that if you look at the modern world, no country has made as great a contribution as these islands. The world's common language, parliamentary democracy, the industrial revolution, the emancipation of minorities—all this originated here in Great Britain. That is something that you should be incredibly proud of. Certainly, as part of the wider English-speaking family, I am very conscious of it, and I have to say that I am very grateful for it. That is, I suppose, why most Australians gave a cheer—some louder than others, but most Australians cheered mightily—when Britons voted hard in 2016 to look to the wider world as much as they look to their friends and near neighbours in Europe.

**Q79 Andrew Rosindell:** On that point, how important do you think the link is that Australia and Britain have—indeed, Canada and New Zealand and others have—in terms of the importance of the monarchy that binds us together as nation states?

**Tony Abbott:** I think it is an important link. I think it is more than merely symbolic, although it certainly is a very powerful symbol; but if you look at the actual governance arrangements within Australia, the fact that our Head of State, the Governor General, represents the Crown, is an important reality in the delicate balancing act between the different arms of Government. If we were ever to move to a different constitutional arrangement I suspect that the relationship between the Head of State and the Head of Government would alter in favour of the Head of State, and I am not sure that would be a good thing. I know, in my country, arguments have raged now for the best part of 30 years about whether we should change, and the point I have always made is we don't have any real problems in Australia that would be improved by ditching the Crown. I certainly think that there are some issues that potentially, at least, could be made more fraught if we did.

**Chair:** Thank you, Mr Abbott. On questions of ditching the Crown, Mr McDonald, you wanted to come in on a separate issue.

**Q80 Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I think you are calling me a queen, there, Chairman.

Mr Abbott, thank you for your contribution so far. Can I shift to Five Eyes? Do you think Five Eyes would benefit from growing in membership?

**Tony Abbott:** This is a very good question, and as Prime Minister I certainly wanted to foster closer intelligence and security links with like-minded democracies that had skin in the strategic game. Again, I would cite Japan, Singapore, Israel and maybe, down the track, even India. I am not sure that we could really in any near term bring others into Five Eyes without possibly weakening it, but I certainly would like to see—myself, I think it would be an improvement if we had, if you like, a Five Eyes plus, where best endeavours were made to develop the same level of strategic



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and security intimacy, the same level of familiarity at all ranks of our defence and security and intelligence organisations, between some of those other like-minded democracies, as has existed for decades between the Five Eyes countries.

- Q81 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I understand why you mention some of the countries that you mentioned, given that you are a former Prime Minister of Australia. Have you given any thought to any European nations that could add something to Five Eyes or a hypothetical Five Eyes plus?

**Tony Abbott:** Obviously, there is the NATO alliance, which has been critical in protecting Europe in the period from 1949 until the collapse of the Berlin wall and the break-up of the old Soviet Union, and is still very significant in terms of trying to ensure that Russian aggression is adequately countered. I think it is important that NATO remains strong. I guess I would stress not just like-minded, but countries that have got a lot of strategic skin in the game. I would certainly think of countries like Japan, in the sorts of—when I think of the world that we are likely to live in over the next few decades I think Japan is an absolutely critical member of the Western alliance. I certainly would want to see the closest possible defence, security and intelligence co-operation with Japan.

- Q82 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Thinking of where the United Kingdom is on the map, we have defence and security agreements and co-operation with countries such as the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, given the importance of the high north, the Icelandic gap and the security situation there. Could you see any scope for, say, Norway joining Five Eyes or the Five Eyes plus kind of outfit that you mentioned?

**Tony Abbott:** I have never really had any dealings with the defence and intelligence communities of countries such as Norway, so I probably best not comment on that. The difficulty with a lot of the European countries, including a great country like Germany, is that they have let their military capacity wither to a very great extent. Even the Netherlands has let its military capacity wither. I am not sure that is very sensible in a world which is becoming less secure, not more secure and is likely to become considerably less secure still in the years and decades to come.

If we are talking about Five Eyes plus, yes, like-minded democracies with the very best values, but also a commitment to strengthening their military and security capabilities rather than letting them wither, are important.

- Q83 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I would agree with part of that. A country like Denmark, for example, has recently just about trebled its spending on defence and is famous for its capability in special forces. It has that skin in the game that you mentioned. Given how important our region of the world is, I am curious to get your thoughts, if an expansion were to happen, could it or would it include a nation in that part of the world that has an interest in the high north, the Icelandic gap, et cetera?



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**Tony Abbott:** The one point I want to make is that, given the extraordinary contribution that the Five Eyes relationship has made to the security and freedom of the wider world over 70 years, I would not want to do anything to dilute it. I am in favour of strengthening it, and Five Eyes plus may well do that, but nothing should be done that ends up diluting it.

Rather than water down the Five Eyes relationship, I would like to see an attempt to build up something like the Five Eyes relationship with like-minded democracies with skin in the game. I don't know the Danish situation well enough to make any observation at all about it.

- Q84 **Bob Seely:** Mr Abbott, thank you for being here. Two questions, if I may, first about CANZUK and secondly about global defence. As I understand it, New Zealand and Australia have very close trading relationships and travel arrangements between their people and their businesses and they are among the closest of any two nations on earth. Looking at CANZUK—Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom—is the Australia-New Zealand relationship a model that can be broadened out to include countries like Canada and the United Kingdom, or do you think that begins to be a bit too problematic?

**Tony Abbott:** In principle, I would not have any problem with it at all. I would applaud it in principle. I would be enthusiastically in favour of it in principle because, if you are looking at the Australia-New Zealand relationship, it is just about as close as any two countries can be while retaining full independent sovereignty. I often say of New Zealand, and indeed of the United Kingdom as well, that they may be foreign countries juridically, but in every meaningful sense, they are family.

I suppose the important thing is to do your best to convert that family feeling into the most advantageous possible arrangements where the citizens of countries can add to each other and in so doing add to themselves. That is important. If, for argument's sake, the British Government and the Australian Government wanted to do a free trade deal that was as good as the trans-Tasman partnership, that would be wonderful. The starting point, as I said earlier, would be no tariffs or quotas on goods, full mutual recognition of standards and credentials, and free-ish movement of people for work not welfare. The more the people of Britain and Australia know and trust each other, the better for everyone.

- Q85 **Bob Seely:** You talked to us about Five Eyes, which is intelligence sharing. Australia is not part of NATO. Do you think we need a global NATO? In the cold war, NATO was very much focused on the north Atlantic and the defence of Europe. Now that you have two significant authoritarian states in the world—Russia with a small economy and lots of nukes, and China with a very big economy, much more powerful, a much more significant threat in many ways—do you think we need a global NATO to act as a defence of democracy globally?

**Tony Abbott:** You say, Bob, that Australia is not a member of NATO and that is true. We have got observer status at NATO meetings and Australian



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Prime Ministers have been to some of those meetings. We participated in the NATO-auspiced work in Afghanistan for many years. We have very close understandings with the main NATO partners, which means that Australia would be a practical member of NATO if there were any need for a NATO operation, as there was in Afghanistan. Again, without wanting to be too prescriptive in terms of structures, what we want is the closest possible comradeship—the closest possible co-operation, collegiality—between the like-minded democracies with strategic skin in the game. That is what I think we should work towards. It is interesting that the Australian Treasurer, who I guess is the equivalent of your Chancellor of the Exchequer, has recently begun Five Eyes teleconferences—Zoom conferences in this era—to talk about the economic response to the pandemic. I certainly think that many areas of government could benefit from a Five Eyes perspective.

- Q86 **Bob Seely:** Finally, just on your attitude to free trade agreements. If one were striking a free trade agreement, theoretically, with a country such as China, to what extent does one say free trade is good in itself? Or to what extent do you think that when striking a free trade deal you look at forced labour, slave labour, human rights abuses or a mercantilist economy that seeks to use trade as a weapon? Where do you find that balance in how you assess the worth of a free trade agreement and free trade with other countries?

**Tony Abbott:** This is a good point you make. You are driving at an important issue here. While freer trade is in the long run beneficial for the world, in the short run, free trade can often be better for relatively poorer countries than for relatively richer countries. Freer trade can often involve an element of equalisation. Sometimes that can be equalising the rich down as well as the poor up. That is all very well in the global context, but if you are a citizen of a richer country, particularly a citizen of a richer country working in a vulnerable industry, that is something that you are entitled to have some reservations about.

I thought, when I was in the position of trying to finalise the free trade deal with China, that it was more problematic than the deals we were also finalising with Japan and South Korea, which are both robust democracies with pretty damn good standards wherever you care to look. But at that stage, we were not nearly as conscious as we now are of the incipient direction of China under its current leadership.

We were not aware to the extent that we are now of what was happening with the Uyghurs, or of this social credit system—the Orwellian system of surveillance and high tech-enabled conformism. There had not been an abrogation of the one country, two systems treaty in Hong Kong. The threats against Taiwan were not nearly as high-octane as they have become. The militarisation of the South China Sea had not really started. The bullying of other neighbours—even India—was not really happening. Maybe we were looking at China through overly rose-coloured glasses back then, but we are certainly not now. I think that there are considerations that would have to be taken into effect now that were probably less pressing back then.



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I should probably conclude this set of observations by pointing out that our free trade deal with China has been, I think, at least as beneficial for Australia as it has been for China. Our exports to China in the period of the free trade deal's operation have gone up by 15%; China's exports to us have gone up by only about 7%. This is one of those free trade deals between a relatively richer and a relatively poorer country that has been good for both, rather than being as one-sided as some of them might sometimes have seemed when looked at in retrospect.

- Q87 **Graham Stringer:** I have two questions, with one following on from the first. Would you have concluded the free trade deal with China if you believed them to be carrying out genocide against the Uyghurs?

**Tony Abbott:** I certainly have no reason to think that horrific things are not happening. It seems that there are something like 1 million Uyghurs in what look horribly like concentration camps, which is absolutely dreadful, abominable, appalling. The treatment of minorities in China is appalling—no doubt about that—but we did not know then what we know now. I would probably rather not answer a hypothetical question, given that we made decisions back then based on what we knew back then.

- Q88 **Graham Stringer:** Thanks. On a completely different point, I go back to what you were saying before about Australia's relationship with NATO and some European countries not spending very much on defence. There were many reasons that people wanted the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. For David Owen, a previous Labour Foreign Secretary, his main reason was that he believed that the European Union wanted to set up its own defence force, which would mean that there were two centres of control for defending Europe, which he thought would be catastrophic. Do you have a view on that, and would you agree with him?

**Tony Abbott:** David Owen was an impressive Foreign Secretary who showed a lot of political courage at different times in his public life. I am not as familiar as I am sure he was with specific proposals coming out of Europe for a European army. But if I were a Briton, I would absolutely expect British armed forces to be capable, powerful, global and under the absolute control of the British Government. Certainly, you would look long and hard and pretty askance at any proposal for Australia to be in some way dependent upon a multinational force.

- Q89 **Alicia Kearns:** Mr Abbott, I want to ask you about the defence and resilience of multinational organisations. China and Australia are engaged in what we might call tough diplomatic engagements in a number of multilateral organisations where the two nations are not at common purpose. How do you think the UK can support like-minded countries such as Australia to strengthen the international rules-based order and make sure those multilaterals do not come under attack?

**Tony Abbott:** Obviously, where there is a problem—where, for argument's sake, Australia or the United Kingdom thinks there is a problem—you would probably in the first instance go to the countries that are most like-minded to see whether they share your view. If there is something like a consensus among like-minded countries, you would then



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go and talk to other countries and see if you can come to a position that is capable of bringing about meaningful change for the better. So I guess you would just do the ordinary kind of coalition and bridge building, but I stress that effective coalition building does not start from some mythical middle ground. It starts from having a very strong set of values, a good analysis of the particular problem, and a credible and practical way forward. If you have got a credible and practical way forward, based on good values, that is where you start to make real progress.

- Q90 Alicia Kearns:** During your premiership, were there multilaterals that you were particularly concerned about that were under specific hostile attack or where there were attempts to undermine them?

**Tony Abbott:** I was probably more concerned in my time with working with like-minded countries on issues such as the Islamist threat in the Middle East; working effectively to ensure that the people-smuggling problem to Australia's north was halted, and halted for good; and working with countries that were not particularly like-minded, such as China, on issues where we had a common interest, such as trying to figure out the riddle of MH370, the missing flight that still has not been located over six years later. So that was my particular concern. I guess all of it was based on a clear appreciation of our values and interests and a desire to work wherever possible with other countries towards clear and practical outcomes. You have always got to know what the problem is and what is a reasonable solution. If you have done that, you can go out and try to recruit others to the cause.

- Q91 Alicia Kearns:** My final question: talking about coalitions and shared outcomes, as nations who are passionate about human rights, how do we prevent atrocities when they are being perpetrated by superpowers? This is not something that Western nations have ever had to face in the past. As you and I have said, there is a genocide taking place in Xinjiang province. How do we tackle them when it is a superpower itself committing these atrocities?

**Tony Abbott:** This is a very good question. It is much more relevant for European countries and America, where the individuals concerned have got interests, but my understanding is that specifically targeted Magnitsky-style sanctions have been applied to a number of high ranking people in Russia, who have been highly involved in the illegal occupation of the Crimea and the proxy invasion of the eastern Ukraine. I think that is the most prospective way forward when it comes to dealing with atrocities by very powerful states against their own people.

If, as we fear, freedom is being slowly strangled in Hong Kong, quite apart from the atrocities being perpetrated against the Uyghurs, it would be absolutely appropriate to apply Magnitsky-style sanctions against the senior leadership in Beijing. Because, let's face it, whatever they are doing in Hong Kong or in Xinjiang province, a lot of them want to do shopping trips to London, to have bank accounts in Switzerland and the United Kingdom and to send their kids to Western universities, and that is something that cannot be business as usual if what you are doing is



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

absolutely horrific towards your own people, or towards people who you have promised to treat well.

**Alicia Kearns:** Thank you. I very much hope that in the near future we will see UK sanctions against those perpetrating appalling acts of cruelty against the Uyghur.

**Chair:** This is a subject that has drawn quite a lot of the Committee's attention, as you know. Dirty money passing through London is something that we have put quite a lot of time—

**Tony Abbott:** I understand. Now, Tom, it is now four o'clock and I am going to have to vanish, but can I just say how much I appreciate the opportunity to talk to the Committee? It has been quite an interesting discussion, with a bit of lively banter and partisan sparring early on, but I hope all of us have learnt something from it.

Q92 **Chair:** May I ask one final question?

**Tony Abbott:** Sure.

Q93 **Chair:** You were instrumental in the negotiations for the CPTP<sup>29</sup>, and I would be interested in your views on Britain's place in it, as a new multilateral organisation, and in its place in the world.

**Tony Abbott:** I am confident that Australia and Japan would look very kindly towards any British application to accede to the trans-Pacific partnership. Certainly, I know that free trade negotiations between Australia and Britain—and I think those with Japan as well—are very well advanced. In terms of global Britain, I think membership of the trans-Pacific partnership would be a great boon to the wider world. Let's not forget that the trans-Pacific partnership was originally conceived by the Obama Administration as the economic arm of the strategic tilt to Asia, so to speak. If Britain were to come into the trans-Pacific partnership, that would be, I suppose, a British tilt to Asia, which Britain should welcome and which the people of the Asia-Pacific, or the Indo-Pacific as we sometimes call it, should also welcome. It is a bit like home porting HMS Queen Elizabeth in Singapore or some such place. I think it would be a wonderful contribution to global stability.

**Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. I know many of us would welcome that outreach. Can I thank you very much indeed for your agreement to participate and for taking every question in good spirit? I am particularly grateful for your contribution. May I also add my own thanks for the support you have given the United Kingdom over many years, but particularly over the last four years?

**Tony Abbott:** Good on you, Tom. And thank you to Committee members.

**Chair:** On that note, I will close the sitting.

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; [Kevin Magee](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Consultation on Senate Estimates Brief [SEC=PROTECTED]  
**Date:** Wednesday, 7 October 2020 1:06:25 PM

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**PROTECTED**

Thanks s 22 – that is a helpful amendment.

Duplicate



**From:** [Goldie, Darren](#)  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** FW: Response to Senate Question 1887 ~~[SEC - OFFICIAL]~~  
**Date:** Wednesday, 7 October 2020 5:59:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [PQoN 1887 - Ayres - United Kingdom Board of Trade Joint President candidacy - Cleared.docx](#)  
[PQoN 1887 - Ayres - United Kingdom Board of Trade Joint President candidacy - Cleared.pdf](#)

~~OFFICIAL~~

s 22

We'll obviously need to update our Abbott Senate Estimates brief/s to reflect this language

Golds

**Darren Goldie** | Assistant Secretary  
 Global Interests Branch | National Security Division  
 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
 m s 22

**From:** Questions on Notice <QON@pmc.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 7 October 2020 11:34 AM  
**To:** Senate Questions (SEN) <Table.Questions.sen@aph.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Questions on Notice <QON@pmc.gov.au>; DLO <dlo@pm.gov.au>; DLO Morton <DLOMorton@pmc.gov.au>; Senate Parliamentary Liaison Office <SenatePLO@pmc.gov.au>; s 22; s 22; s 22; s 22; Brazier, Roderick <Roderick.Brazier@pmc.gov.au>; Goldie, Darren <Darren.Goldie@pmc.gov.au>; s 22; Pullen, Victoria <Victoria.Pullen@pmc.gov.au>; s 22 Foster, Stephanie <Stephanie.Foster@pmc.gov.au>; Millar, Caroline <Caroline.Millar@pmc.gov.au>; Reid, John <John.Reid@pmc.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Response to Senate Question 1887 ~~[SEC - OFFICIAL]~~

~~OFFICIAL~~

Good morning,

s 47E(d)  
 s 47E(d)

Attached is a Word and PDF version.

Kind regards

s 22  
 Ministerial Correspondence and Briefs Section | Ministerial & Parliamentary Support Branch  
 Ministerial Support Division | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
 p. s 22 | e s 22 | w. [www.pmc.gov.au](http://www.pmc.gov.au)

One National Circuit Barton ACT 2600 | PO Box 6500 CANBERRA ACT 2600

# DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

Minister representing the Prime Minister

## SENATE QUESTION

United Kingdom Board of Trade Joint President Candidacy

**Question No. 1887**

**Senator Timothy Ayres:** asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister on 3 September 2020—

With reference to the candidacy of former Prime Minister, Mr Tony Abbott, for the role of Joint President of the United Kingdom Board of Trade:

1. Have any discussions taken place between representatives of the Australian Government and the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy in advance of the announcement of the appointment; if so, when and with whom did the discussions take place.
2. Has the Prime Minister made any representations to the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, on how many occasions, when and by whom were representations made.
3. Has the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet made any representations to the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, on how many occasions, when and by whom were they made.
4. Have any Australian Government resources been applied to support Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, what resources have been applied and what has been the total cost of supporting Mr Abbott's candidacy.

**Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann -** The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the Honourable Senator's question:

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is not aware of any discussions, representations or resources in support of the candidacy of former Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott for the role of Joint President of the United Kingdom Board of Trade.

Appointments to the United Kingdom Board of Trade are a matter for the government of the United Kingdom.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET**

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4. Have any Australian Government resources been applied to support Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, what resources have been applied and what has been the total cost of supporting Mr Abbott's candidacy.

**Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann -** The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the Honourable Senator's question:

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is not aware of any discussions, representations or resources in support of the candidacy of former Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott for the role of Joint President of the United Kingdom Board of Trade.

Appointments to the United Kingdom Board of Trade are a matter for the government of the United Kingdom.



s 22

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**MEDIA  
TALKING  
POINTS  
DISTRIBUTION:  
STANDARD**

**Topic: TRADE**  
**Subject: Australia-UK FTA**

**Originating Division:  
RTD**

**Version Date: 8/10/2020**  
**Version: 4**

s 22  
**Expiry: 27/10/2020**

**Talking Points**

s 22

**If asked: There are reports that former Foreign Minister and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Alexander Downer, has been engaged as a consultant to the Government of Gibraltar to advise on the Australia-UK FTA negotiations. Can you confirm that this reporting is correct?**



- Yes, I am aware of reports that Mr Downer will provide advice to the Government of Gibraltar
  - as a British Overseas Territory, Gibraltar has a direct interest in the UK's negotiations with Australia
  - the engagement of Mr Downer is a matter for the Government of Gibraltar
  - according to the report, Mr Downer has placed himself on the Government's transparency register as a consultant

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22 ; Brazier, Roderick; Goldie, Darren; s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Questions on Notice [SEC-~~OFFICIAL.Sensitive~~]  
**Date:** Tuesday, 20 October 2020 5:26:57 PM  
**Attachments:** [5 - Attachment C - UK Government press release.pdf](#)  
[image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image005.png](#)

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~~**OFFICIAL.Sensitive**~~


All

per Golds' earlier email, our response below:

Question on notice for PM&C:

- *Why and when did PM&C seek advice that the UK Board of Trade has no direct role in striking free trade deals?*

s 47C, s 47E(d)



thanks

s 22

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 20 October 2020 5:13 PM  
**To:** Brazier, Roderick <Roderick.Brazier@pmc.gov.au>; Goldie, Darren <Darren.Goldie@pmc.gov.au>; s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** Questions on Notice [SEC-~~OFFICIAL.Sensitive~~]

~~**OFFICIAL.Sensitive**~~

Questions on notice for Senator Cormann:

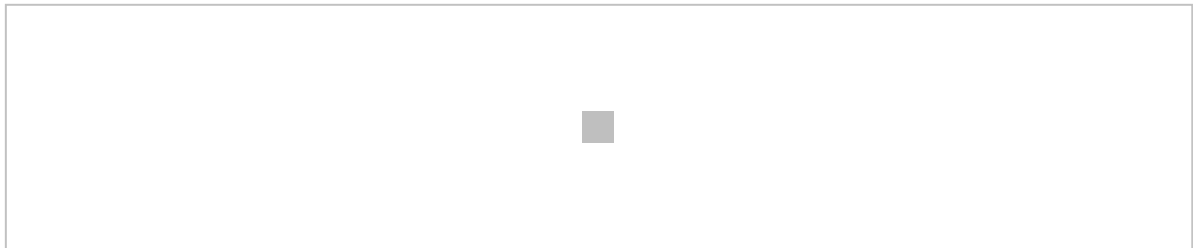
- Did PMO facilitate, provide assistance to or communicate with Tony Abbott regarding his appointment to the UK Board of Trade?
- Did PMO provide advice to Tony Abbott on his appointment to or intention to nominate for the UK Board of Trade?
- Did Tony Abbott tell the PM or PMO of his intention to nominate for the UK Board of Trade?

Question on notice for PM&C:

- Why and when did PM&C seek advice that the UK Board of Trade has no direct role in striking free trade deals?

Kind regards,

s 22 | s 22  
International Division | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
p. s 22 | m s 22  
e. s 22 | w. [www.pmc.gov.au](http://www.pmc.gov.au)  
One National Circuit Barton ACT 2600 | PO Box 6500 CANBERRA ACT 2600



s 22

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s 22

Department being questioned	Home Affairs – 5:05pm
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s 22

<p>Tony Abbott's overseas travel in the context of international travel restrictions (COVID-19)</p>	<p>Senator Kristina Keneally (ALP, NSW)</p>	<p>[To Commissioner Outram] PM&amp;C has advised this afternoon, in another estimates hearing, that the number of stranded Australians has risen to 32,000 from 29,000. In that context, I would like to enquire about a media report in <i>The Australian</i> yesterday that the former PM, Tony Abbott, is currently in Rome. Can you confirm that Mr Abbott has received a travel exemption to travel overseas?</p> <p>Does the auto exempt category of 'government business' also apply to foreign government business?</p> <p>Who wrote these guidelines—ABF or Government? Were these guidelines based on Home Affairs' advice?</p> <p>Is it the Government's intention that this includes foreign government business?</p> <p>Will Mr Abbott be required to quarantine upon his return?</p>	<p>Commissioner Outram: s 22</p> <p>First, to the House of Commons; second, to work as an adviser to the British Government's Board on Trade s 22</p> <p>s 22</p>	<p>17:31</p>	
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Estimates hearing		Finance, Public Administration Legislation Committee			
Topic area	<a href="#">Senator</a>	Question	Response	Time asked	Sent to Division?







Tony Abbotts takeup of a role with the UK Government	Senator Penny Wong, ALP, SA	How about his ostensible appointment to the UK Board of Trade?	Caroline Millar, Deputy Secretary: Not that I am aware of. Minister Cormann: Not that I am aware but will take on notice. But clearly Mr Abbott is an individuals, who like other PMs, are able to seek opportunities once they leave parliament.	16:56	
Tony Abbotts takeup of a role with the UK Government	Senator Penny Wong, ALP, SA	Mr Abbott says that he will be providing advice to the UK on post-Brexit trade deals. Does this include UKFTA? When or why was the advice sought?	Caroline Millar, Deputy Secretary: we sought advice from DFAT who said that advisors to the UK Board Of Trade have no direct involvement in FTA negotiations. We'll take that on		

			notice.		
Tony Abbotts takeup of a role with the UK Government	Senator Penny Wong, ALP, SA	<p>Has any legal or other advice been sought on this matter?</p> <p>So you don't think there is an issue with a former PM advising a foreign government on trade relations?</p> <p>So a former PM can go to Germany, China and offer their services?</p> <p>If you have two negotiating parties, and have one person who led one country advising the other, is that appropriate?</p>	<p>Caroline Millar, Deputy Secretary: He's a private citizen now. No, we have had no engagement on this.</p> <p>Minister Cormann: Mr Abbott is a private citizen. This is not an appropriate question for PMC. I am just saying that you shouldn't ask a question of an official like that. I am not concerned about what a private citizen is doing. As I say, I am not concerned what a former Prime Minister is doing as a private citizen.</p> <p>Minister Cormann: I am not responsible for what former prime ministers do. If you want to introduce legislation to limit it then you can.</p> <p>Minister Cormann: I think people who serve the public, on either side, are entitled to do what they wish to do as private citizens, obviously within the requirements of ministerial standards. I am not concerned about the role of former PM Abbott – he is not involved in negotiations of FTAs. Tony Abbott has not been PM for more than 5 years, and he has taken on a job that is entirely a matter for him, and that is the advice I have received from ministerial colleagues.</p>	16:59	
Tony Abbotts takeup of a role with the UK Government	Senator Penny Wong, ALP, SA	<p>Does the PM think it is appropriate for a former PM to work for a foreign government on issues potentially counter to Australia's interests?</p> <p>Has Prime Minister, PMC or PMO provided any advice to Abbott on his new role, including in terms of compliance with Australian legislation? Has any other department provided Mr Abbot advice?</p> <p>Has any other member of the government? About the use of his office, entitlements for this new role?</p> <p>Any measures in place to ensure he doesn't use his office or entitlements to further the interests of a foreign government?</p>	<p>Minister Cormann: I don't agree with the premise of the question – I don't believe he is working counter to Australia's interests. He is a private citizen.</p> <p>Caroline Millar, Deputy Secretary: The department have not provided any advice. I am not aware of any advice being provided.</p> <p>Senator, the AG has said previously that Mr Abbott would be aware of his obligations for former cabinet ministers. Not to my knowledge.</p> <p>Stephanie Foster PSM, Deputy Secretary: not to my knowledge.</p> <p>Minister Cormann: Not</p>	17:04	

			that I am aware of. I don't believe that's what he's doing.		
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s 22



s 22

Kind regards,

s 22

**Senate Estimates October 2020**  
**20 October**  
Monitoring of other departmental hearings

Estimates hearing	<i>Legal and Constitutional Affairs</i>
s 22	

s 22

s 22	Department being questioned   Home Affairs – 5:05pm
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Tony Abbott's overseas travel in the context of international travel restrictions (COVID-19)	Senator Kristina Keneally (ALP, NSW)	<p>[To Commissioner Outram] PM&amp;C has advised this afternoon, in another estimates hearing, that the number of stranded Australians has risen to 32,000 from 29,000. In that context, I would like to enquire about a media report in <i>The Australian</i> yesterday that the former PM, Tony Abbott, is currently in Rome. Can you confirm that Mr Abbott has received a travel exemption to travel overseas?</p> <p>Does the auto exempt category of 'government business' also apply to foreign government business?</p> <p>Who wrote these guidelines—ABF or Government? Were these guidelines based on Home Affairs' advice?</p>	<p>Commissioner Outram: s 22</p> <p>First, to the House of Commons; second, to work as an adviser to the British Government's Board on Trade. s 22</p>	17:31	
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Tony Abbotts takeup of a role with the UK Government	Senator Penny Wong, ALP, SA	Is the lifting of the cap a collective decision of national cabinet?  So the PM misspoke when he said that he isn't lifting the caps?	Alison Frame, Deputy Secretary: Collective decision of the national cabinet.	16:51	
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			<p>Worth clarifying that it is a Cth power relating to the cap, air navigation regulations 2016,</p> <p>Minister Cormann: let me answer on behalf of the government. You are taking a public comment of the PM at a point of time, and as the situation changes, the context of that decision changes. That is a very important thing and you are taking it completely out of context in the way you are trying to position them here.</p> <p>Alison Frame, Deputy Secretary: the legal basis for the caps is the regulation, the legal basis for the quarantine is at the state level.</p>		
Tony Abbotts takeup of a role with the UK Government	Senator Penny Wong, ALP, SA	<p>Did the department or the PMO/ government provide any assistance to Tony Abbott to travel to the UK?</p> <p>What about on return?</p> <p>How about PMO?</p> <p>Any communication with him surrounding the visit?</p>	<p>Caroline Millar, Deputy Secretary: not to my knowledge.</p> <p>If so we're not aware.</p> <p>Martin: No.</p> <p>Minister Cormann: Not that I am aware but will have to take on notice.</p> <p>Minister Cormann, Millar, Table/all: Not that they are aware</p>	16:54	

Tony Abbotts takeup of a role with the UK Government	Senator Penny Wong, ALP, SA	How about his ostensible appointment to the UK Board of Trade?	<p>Caroline Millar, Deputy Secretary: Not that I am aware of.</p> <p>Minister Cormann: Not that I am aware but will take on notice. But clearly Mr Abbott is an individuals, who like other PMs, are able to seek opportunities once they leave parliament.</p>	16:56	
Tony Abbotts takeup of a role with the UK Government	Senator Penny Wong, ALP, SA	<p>Mr Abbott says that he will be providing advice to the UK on post-Brexit trade deals. Does this include UKFTA?</p> <p>When or why was the advice sought?</p>	<p>Caroline Millar, Deputy Secretary: we sought advice from DFAT who said that advisors to the UK Board Of Trade have no direct involvement in FTA negotiations.</p> <p>We'll take that on notice.</p>		
Tony Abbotts takeup of a role with the UK Government	Senator Penny Wong, ALP, SA	<p>Has any legal or other advice been sought on this matter?</p> <p>So you don't think there is an issue with a former PM advising a foreign government on trade relations?</p> <p>So a former PM can go to Germany, China and offer their services?</p>	<p>Caroline Millar, Deputy Secretary: He's a private citizen now. No, we have had no engagement on this.</p> <p>Minister Cormann: Mr Abbott is a private citizen. This is not an appropriate question for PMC. I am just saying that you shouldn't ask a question of an official like that. I am not concerned about what a private citizen is doing. As I say, I am not concerned what a former Prime Minister is doing as a private citizen.</p> <p>Minister Cormann: I am not responsible for what former prime</p>	16:59	

		<p>If you have two negotiating parties, and have one person who led one country advising the other, is that appropriate?</p>	<p>ministers do. If you want to introduce legislation to limit it then you can.</p> <p>Minister Cormann: I think people who serve the public, on either side, are entitled to do what they wish to do as private citizens, obviously within the requirements of ministerial standards. I am not concerned about the role of former PM Abbott – he is not involved in negotiations of FTAs. Tony Abbott has not been PM for more than 5 years, and he has taken on a job that is entirely a matter for him, and that is the advice I have received from ministerial colleagues.</p>		
Tony Abbotts takeup of a role with the UK Government	Senator Penny Wong, ALP, SA	<p>Does the PM think it is appropriate for a former PM to work for a foreign government on issues potentially counter to Australia's interests?</p> <p>Has Prime Minister, PMC or PMO provided any advice to Abbott on his new role, including in terms of compliance with Australian legislation? Has any other department provided Mr Abbot advice?</p>	<p>Minister Cormann: I don't agree with the premise of the question – I don't believe he is working counter to Australia's interests. He is a private citizen.</p> <p>Caroline Millar, Deputy Secretary: The department have not provided any advice. I am not aware of any advice being provided. Senator, the AG has said previously that Mr Abbott would be aware of his obligations for former cabinet ministers. Not to my knowledge.</p>	17:04	

		<p>Has any other member of the government? About the use of his office, entitlements for this new role?</p> <p>Any measures in place to ensure he doesn't use his office or entitlements to further the interests of a foreign government?</p>	<p>Stephanie Foster PSM, Deputy Secretary: not to my knowledge.</p> <p>Minister Cormann: Not that I am aware of.</p> <p>I don't believe that's what he's doing.</p>		
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s 22



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Proof Committee Hansard

## SENATE

FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION  
COMMITTEE

**Estimates**

(Public)

TUESDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2020

CANBERRA

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**SENATE**

**FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 20 October 2020**

**Members in attendance:** Senators Ayres, Davey, Gallagher, Hanson-Young, Kitching [by video link], Lines, McKenzie, O'Sullivan, Paterson, Rice [by video link], Scarr, Siewert, Waters, Watt, Wong.

**PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET PORTFOLIO****In Attendance**

Senator Cormann, Minister for Finance

**National COVID-19 Commission Advisory Board**

Mr Neville Power, Chairman

Mr Malcolm Thompson, Head of Taskforce

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Ms Stephanie Foster PSM, Deputy Secretary

Mr John Reid, First Assistant Secretary, Government Division

Ms Leonie McGregor, First Assistant Secretary, Cabinet Division

Mr Peter Rush, Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary and Government Branch

Ms Celeste Moran, Assistant Secretary, Legal Policy Branch

Mr Tom Gilmartin, Chief Operating Officer

Mr Gerard Martin, First Assistant Secretary, Ministerial Support Division

Mr Paul Wood, Chief Financial Officer

Mr Nathan Heeney, Chief Information Office

Ms Caroline Millar, Deputy Secretary, National Security and International Policy Group

Mr Rod Brazier, First Assistant Secretary, International Division

Mr Lachlan Colquhoun, First Assistant Secretary, National Security Division

Mr Trevor Jones, Assistant Secretary, Disaster Preparedness, Plans and Incident Management Branch

Mr Matthew Fox, Assistant Secretary, Defence Branch

Mr Simon Duggan, Deputy Secretary

Mr James Chisholm, First Assistant Secretary, Industry, Infrastructure and Environment Division

Mr Brenton Goldsworthy, First Assistant Secretary, Economic Division

Mr Jason Lange, Assistant Secretary, Office of Best Practice Regulation

Ms Alison Frame, Deputy Secretary

Ms Genevieve Quilty, First Assistant Secretary, Social Policy Division

Mr William Story, First Assistant Secretary, APS Reform Office

Ms Nicole Spencer, Head of Taskforce, COVID-19 Response

**Committee met at 09:00**

**CHAIR (Senator Paterson):** Good morning. I declare open this meeting of the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee. Today the committee will continue its examination of the budget estimates for 2020-21. It will hear from the department and the agencies of the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio, as listed on today's program. The committee may also examine the annual reports of the departments and agencies appearing before it. Senators, departments and agencies have been provided with advice on the arrangements in place to ensure that budget estimates 2020-21 are conducted in a safe environment. This guidance will be also available from the secretariat. The committee appreciates the cooperation of all attendees in adhering to these arrangements.

The committee has before it a program listing agencies and outcomes relating to matters for which senators have given notice. The committee has fixed 4 December 2020 as the date for the return of answers to questions taken on notice. The committee has also scheduled further hearings to examine the Finance portfolio tomorrow and Thursday 22 October, as well as the cross-portfolio Indigenous matters on Friday.

Under standing order 26, the committee must take all evidence in public session. This includes answers to questions on notice. I remind all witnesses that, in giving evidence to the committee, they are protected by parliamentary privilege. It is unlawful for anyone to threaten or disadvantage a witness on account of evidence given to a committee, and such action may be treated by the Senate as a contempt. It is also a contempt to give false or misleading evidence to a committee.



s 22

**Senator WONG:** Did the department or the Prime Minister's office provide any assistance or facilitation to Mr Abbott during his recent visit to Europe and the United Kingdom?

**Ms Millar:** The answer is no—no, we didn't.

s 22

**Senator WONG:** Okay. Ms Millar, do you want me to ask the question again?

**Ms Millar:** If you wouldn't mind.

**Senator WONG:** Did the department or the PMO provide any assistance or facilitation to Mr Abbott during his recent visit to Europe and the United Kingdom?

**Ms Millar:** Not to my knowledge.

**Ms Foster:** The only other person who might know is Mr Martin and he is listening and I'm sure if he has any information—

**Senator WONG:** He'll trundle up the passage and provide it.

**Ms Foster:** he will come, but I think the fact that he hasn't appeared means, no, we haven't provided that assistance.

**Senator WONG:** What about on his return?

**Ms Millar:** Not to my knowledge either.

**Senator WONG:** What about the PMO?

**Ms Millar:** If so, we're not aware.

**Senator WONG:** Here he is, trundling up the corridor.

**Mr Martin:** Senator, that's a no.

**Senator WONG:** It was a very dramatic no. Senator Cormann, can you tell me whether the PMO provided any assistance or facilitation to Mr Abbott in relation to his recent visit to the UK and Europe?

**Senator Cormann:** Not that I'm aware, but I'd have to take that on notice.

**Senator WONG:** Was there any communication with him regarding the visit?

**Ms Millar:** Not that I'm aware.

**Senator WONG:** I'll ask the same question of the PMO, please.

**Senator Cormann:** Not that I'm aware of.

**Senator WONG:** Was there any communication with him about his ostensible appointment to the UK Board of Trade?

**Ms Millar:** Not to my knowledge.

**Senator WONG:** Have you been asked to provide advice in relation to that?

**Ms Millar:** No, we haven't.

**Senator WONG:** Is the PMO aware of his appointment to the UK Board of Trade?

**Senator Cormann:** I've obviously read about it in the media and I'm sure so has the PMO.

**Senator WONG:** Did he have any discussion with the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's staff about—

**Senator Cormann:** Not that I'm aware, but—

**Senator WONG:** about his intent to nominate for another country's board of trade?

**Senator Cormann:** Not that I'm aware.

**Senator WONG:** Can you take that on notice?

**Senator Cormann:** Sure. Clearly, Mr Abbott is an individual in the same way Ms Gillard, Mr Rudd and Mr Howard are individuals, who, of course, are quite entitled to pursue opportunities in their private life after they have left the department. I'm not quite sure what sort of possible responsibilities you believe are relevant here in terms of Prime Minister Morrison.

**Senator WONG:** I just wondered if he'd told him, and if so—

**Senator Cormann:** As I say, I'm not aware. I'm not sure that it's—

**Senator WONG:** I've just asked you to take it on notice. Mr Abbott says he'll be providing advice to the UK government on its post-Brexit trade deals. Is PM&C aware as to whether this would include the UK-Australia FTA?

**Ms Millar:** The advice that we've received from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade—and, in fact, through the UK government's Department for International Trade—was that advisers to the Board of Trade have no direct role in striking trade deals.

**Senator WONG:** When did you seek this advice?

**Ms Millar:** Actually, Senator, I'm not aware. My briefing says this, and I did ask.

**Senator WONG:** I'd like to know why it was sought and when it was sought.

**Ms Millar:** We can take that on notice for you.

**Senator WONG:** Does someone behind you know, or does someone elsewhere know?

**Ms Millar:** No, we don't.

**Senator WONG:** Has there been any advice sought—possibly including legal advice or advice from other departments—or has there been any consideration within PM&C of the appropriateness of Mr Abbott advising the UK government on a trade agreement with Australia?

**Ms Millar:** We haven't given any consideration to it, no.

**Senator WONG:** Why not?

**Ms Millar:** As the minister said, this is an issue for Mr Abbott—he's a private citizen now—and we've had no engagement with this.

**Senator WONG:** So PM&C doesn't think it's an issue and nor does the Prime Minister?

**Senator Cormann:** Are you suggesting that somebody—

**Senator WONG:** Can I finish any question? Chair, I hadn't even got out—

**CHAIR:** Fair point, Senator Wong. Please finish your question and, Minister, answer.

**Senator WONG:** So PM&C doesn't consider it an issue that a former prime minister is advising the negotiating party about a trade agreement and negotiation with Australia? You don't believe that's an issue?

**Senator Cormann:** Hang on. That is an inappropriate question for you to ask of PM&C. You're asking for an opinion in relation to something that a private citizen—

**Senator WONG:** It's a probity question. He's a former prime minister!

**Senator Cormann:** What about the activities of former prime ministers Gillard and Rudd?

**Senator WONG:** The question is about brokering a deal with the country you used to lead, okay?

**Senator Cormann:** So you would like—

**Senator WONG:** I'm just asking whether the department considers it appropriate. I think Ms Millar's answer is not whether they've turned their mind to it but that he's not doing that. Is that correct?

**Ms Millar:** That's correct.

**Senator WONG:** On their advice, which isn't your response.

**Senator Cormann:** You asked her for an opinion on whether she thought it was appropriate, and that is an inappropriate question to ask an official.

**Senator WONG:** So you're fine with it?

**Senator Cormann:** I'm just saying you shouldn't ask a question of an official about what their opinion is.

**Senator WONG:** Does the Prime Minister have any issue?

**Senator Cormann:** I'm not concerned about what former Prime Minister Abbott is doing in his post-political career as a private citizen.

**Senator WONG:** He's a former prime minister, and I'm asking whether it's appropriate for him to advise the other negotiating party in the context of a trade negotiation with Australia. Imagine if it were—

**Senator Cormann:** As I say, I'm not concerned about what former Prime Minister Abbott is doing as a private citizen in terms of his—

**Senator WONG:** So former prime ministers can go to Germany, China or any one of our major trading partners and say, 'I'm happy to provide my services in the context of your negotiations with Australia,' and you think that's not inappropriate?

**Senator Cormann:** I think you're characterising what he's doing wrongly.

**Senator WONG:** Which is your line on this, Senator Cormann?

**Senator Cormann:** I'm not responsible for what Mr Abbott chooses to do or not to do. If you're suggesting that we should introduce laws that limit what former prime ministers can do after they leave public office—

**Senator WONG:** That's a strawman argument.

**Senator Cormann:** No, that is the implication of what you're suggesting.

**Senator WONG:** No, it's not. That is such a stupid thing to say.

**Senator Cormann:** You're suggesting that somehow we should be controlling what—

**Senator WONG:** You're usually smarter than that. That is a strawman argument.

**Senator Cormann:** No, it's not a strawman argument.

**Senator WONG:** It's as simple as this. You have two negotiating parties. One has their national interests; another has their national interests. The purpose of the negotiation for each party is to try and broker a deal which maximises their national interest.

**Senator Cormann:** Well, I don't believe that he is negotiating.

**Senator WONG:** Let me finish. To have a person who led one country advising another country about how to broker the deal—I'm asking you whether you think that's appropriate. It's not about a law; I'm asking whether you think it's appropriate.

**Senator Cormann:** I think it's entirely appropriate for former servants in government—or opposition for that matter—to pursue a career after they leave public office.

**Senator WONG:** No matter what they do? They can hawk themselves to any government?

**Senator Cormann:** Well, there are limits. There are clearly requirements in the Statement of Ministerial Standards that apply to all former ministers and former prime ministers, and I don't believe that you're suggesting that there is any breach here.

**Senator WONG:** No, I'm asking.

**Senator Cormann:** Former Prime Minister Abbott has been out of office for more than five years, yet essentially you want to control what he can do professionally now, forever and a day.

**Senator WONG:** No, that's not true. Why do you say this stuff?

**Senator Cormann:** Well, that is the implication of what you're suggesting.

**Senator WONG:** You're getting tired, aren't you, Mathias?

**Senator Cormann:** That is the implication of what you're suggesting.

**Senator WONG:** I mean, seriously! Please stop. Please stop making assertions about what I'm saying which are false. Please stop. I am not saying that.

**Senator Cormann:** Our government is not responsible—

**Senator WONG:** I have not said we should legislate. I'm not saying I want to control what he does. They are words out of your mouth. I am saying this: we have a former leader of a country who has hawked himself to the government of another country which is negotiating with us, and I am asking you whether or not you consider it appropriate.

**Senator Cormann:** And I've answered that question. The role that former Prime Minister Abbott has taken on is not a role that I am concerned about in any way. Your characterisation of his role is false, as has already been indicated to you. He's not involved in negotiations on free trade agreements.

**Senator WONG:** Okay. Can I tell you what he said? I'll tell you what he said:

... Abbott said he was "only too keen" to help the UK. "A UK-Australia trade deal, maximising the movement of goods, services and people, is clearly in the best interests of both our countries," he said. "My government finalised trade deals between Australia and China, Japan and Korea. I'm looking forward to bringing that expertise to bear as Britain works towards mutually beneficial improvements with its major trading partners."

**Senator Cormann:** Tony Abbott has not been a Prime Minister of Australia for more than five years. He is a private citizen. He has taken on a job. That's entirely a matter for him. My advice is that he's not involved in trade negotiations in the context of the role that he's taken on.

**Senator WONG:** Where's your advice?

**Senator Cormann:** That is the advice that I have received in the past.

**Senator WONG:** From whom?

**Senator Cormann:** From my colleagues.

**Senator WONG:** Ministerial colleagues?

**Senator Cormann:** Yes.

**Senator WONG:** So it's been discussed?

**Senator Cormann:** No, it has not been discussed. You are raising this issue now here in the course of estimates.

**Senator WONG:** I assume, therefore, from your answer—I'm putting this to you, and you can disagree: does the Prime Minister think it is appropriate for a former Australian Prime Minister to work for a foreign government and to provide advice on issues that are potentially counter to Australia's interests?

**Senator Cormann:** I don't agree with the premise of that question.

**Senator WONG:** Which bit?

**Senator Cormann:** The Prime Minister is comfortable with what former Prime Minister Abbott is doing. He's comfortable with what former Prime Minister Gillard is doing and what former Prime Minister Rudd is doing.

**Senator WONG:** Which bit of what I said?

**Senator Cormann:** I do not accept your proposition that somehow he is acting counter to the interests of Australia. That is your false assertion.

**Senator WONG:** Well, he is working for a foreign government. He is obviously going to provide advice to them about furthering of their interests, not ours.

**Senator Cormann:** He is a private citizen.

**Senator WONG:** Okay. So, no, you don't have any concerns. Has the Prime Minister communicated or raised any concerns with Mr Abbott about his new role?

**Senator Cormann:** I'm not aware of any communications, but, as I have indicated to you, the Prime Minister said publicly that he thought Mr Abbott was a good hire. I think those are the words he used.

**Senator WONG:** Has the Prime Minister, his office or PM&C provided Mr Abbott with any advice in relation to his new role, including any compliance with relevant Australian legislation?

**Ms Millar:** We haven't provided any advice, no.

**Senator WONG:** We? Who's 'we'?

**Ms Millar:** The department have provided no advice.

**Senator WONG:** To Mr Abbott?

**Ms Millar:** No.

**Senator WONG:** Are you aware of any advice being provided?

**Ms Millar:** No, I'm not.

**Senator WONG:** Are you aware of Mr Abbott being advised to register as an agent of foreign influence?

**Ms Millar:** The Attorney-General has said publicly that Mr Abbott would be aware of the routine requirements for former cabinet ministers under the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme.

**Senator WONG:** Yes. That's not what I asked you. Do you have any knowledge other than—

**Ms Millar:** No, I don't.

**Senator WONG:** To the department's knowledge, has any other department provided Mr Abbott with any advice in relation to his new role and complying with relevant Australian legislation?

**Ms Millar:** Not to my knowledge, no.

**Senator WONG:** Ms Foster?

**Ms Foster:** Not to my knowledge.

**Senator WONG:** Has any member of the government, Senator Cormann, provided Mr Abbott with any advice in relation to his new role and compliance with relevant Australian legislation?

**Senator Cormann:** Not that I'm aware of.

**Senator WONG:** Has he been provided with any advice as to the use of his office or entitlements as a former Prime Minister of Australia for the purpose of his new role?

**Senator Cormann:** Not that I'm aware of.

**Senator WONG:** Have any measures been put in place to ensure he doesn't use his office or entitlements to further the interests of a foreign government?

**Senator Cormann:** I don't believe that that is what he's doing.

**Senator WONG:** So no advice.

**Senator Cormann:** I'm not aware of any.

**Senator WONG:** On Sunday 19 April Senator Payne announced an international inquiry into—

**CHAIR:** Are you moving on to another topic, Senator Wong?

**Senator WONG:** I have.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I'm not sure if you're aware that there have been media reports, for example in Crikey in December last year, that Kevin Rudd, another former Prime Minister, has delivered a number of speeches in China, including as a guest of the United Front Work Department or its affiliates, including the Central Institute of Socialism. That speech was in November 2017, and Mr Rudd has delivered speeches at a number of other forums including the Australia-China Future Forum, which is described as a united front sponsored forum. Do you have any similar concerns about Mr Rudd's activities as a former prime minister?

**Senator WONG:** Giving a speech.

**Senator Cormann:** Mr Rudd, Ms Gillard—

**Senator WONG:** He's giving a speech. Is that what you're worried about?

**Senator Cormann:** Mr Abbott, Mr Howard, they're all former prime ministers of Australia who are now private citizens. I think they deserve to be treated with courtesy and respect, and that's what we'll do. It's a matter for them to explain the activities that they pursue.

**CHAIR:** Indeed, and I'll take Senator Wong's interjection that my concern might be that he was giving a speech. I think it's interesting he's giving speeches, particularly at these locations, but—

**Senator WONG:** Have you read his speeches?

**CHAIR:** he's also chair of some advisory bodies linked to the United Front Work Department. People in this forum know what that organisation does.

**Senator Cormann:** I wasn't aware of it.

**Senator WONG:** Really?

**CHAIR:** Crikey was asking the question: why hasn't he registered on the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme, given his association with these organisations?

**Senator Cormann:** I think it's a question for him; it's not a question for us.

**CHAIR:** All right, thank you.

**Senator WONG:** Have you read his speeches?

**CHAIR:** No, I wouldn't—

**Senator WONG:** He's pretty clear about national interest and China. Really, are you suggesting—

**Senator Cormann:** What are you saying about Mr Abbott, that he's not aware of the national interest?

**Senator WONG:** Mr Rudd is not working for the Chinese Communist Party. He is—

**Senator Cormann:** No, I said—

**Senator WONG:** Mr Abbott—

**Senator Cormann:** what are you saying in relation to Mr Abbott, that he's not aware of the national interest?

**Senator WONG:** Mr Abbott is working for a foreign government. That's the distinction. He's doing work for a foreign government, which is why he's had to register. It's a different thing, and making assertions that suggest that former Prime Minister Rudd, whose writings on China are documented—

**Senator Cormann:** I have not made any assertions at all.

**CHAIR:** This bloke has.

**Senator WONG:** Yes, he has—is somehow not patriotic or working for the united front, is pretty bad. I know you like to get in the media, because you want to talk about China, but really it's pretty bad. He is well respected across the political spectrum and internationally for his knowledge of China. He is very clear about Australia's national interest and, if you have read any of his recent speech, you would know that. So I suggest you take some of this sort of wolverine behaviour elsewhere. Really.

**CHAIR:** Senator Wong, do not put words in my mouth.

**Senator WONG:** We heard what you said.

**CHAIR:** Order. I let you have a spray at me. The least you can do for me, as chair, is give me an opportunity to respond. Do not put words in my mouth. I will happily go back and review the *Hansard*—

**Senator WONG:** Sure, please do.

**CHAIR:** and stand behind every word that I said. For your information, I attended Mr Rudd's speech in Parliament House for Peter Hartcher's book, with you—

**Senator WONG:** With me.

**CHAIR:** and I listened with great interest. I have not suggested once, in this forum or any other, that he's unpatriotic or that he has an allegiance to a foreign power.

**Senator WONG:** What's the implication of reference to united front?

**CHAIR:** No, Senator Wong.

**Senator WONG:** What's the implication?

**CHAIR:** All I was doing was making the point—

**Senator WONG:** Seriously?

**CHAIR:** that you can ask questions about Mr Abbott as a former Prime Minister—

**Senator WONG:** Who is working for a foreign government!

**CHAIR:** and his association in the UK, and I can equally ask questions about Mr Rudd and his activities.

**Senator WONG:** A speech.

**CHAIR:** A number of speeches—

**Senator WONG:** —you made reference to the United Front. Everybody knows what you were doing.

**CHAIR:** Senator Wong, you are showing hypersensitivity—

**Senator WONG:** No, I am not.

**CHAIR:** Given the time I allowed you to pursue Mr Abbott and his associations, and your questions about his registration on the foreign influence, you are showing a double-standard and hypersensitivity.

**Senator WONG:** No—please don't accuse a woman of being hypersensitive. We are quite commonly used to that.

**CHAIR:** I clearly was not making a gendered reference there.

**Senator WONG:** Please do not. That's the first point. The second point is that, yes, you did allow me plenty of time, and I appreciate that. There is a distinction between a prime minister giving a speech and somebody who has taken up an employment contract at a position with a foreign government. Right? I am simply making that point. And I think the way in which you referenced United Front—everyone knows what that means. Really, it was not becoming of you, nor respectful of Mr Rudd.

**CHAIR:** Since you have raised it, I will clarify. The reason I said that is that I did not think it was necessary to go into a lengthy explanation of what the United Front—

**Senator WONG:** Not because of any—I accept that. But it looked like an implication.

**CHAIR:** I'm telling you sincerely that it was not.

**From:** [Goldie, Darren](#)  
**To:** s 22; [Brazier, Roderick](#); [Millar, Caroline](#)  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** RE: Phone Message - John Geering - DFAT ~~[SEC-OFFICIAL]~~  
**Date:** Friday, 23 October 2020 3:28:03 PM

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~~OFFICIAL~~

Thanks s 22

Rod and Caroline,

I followed up the query from John (see below), confirming the extent of our knowledge and understanding of (former PM) Abbott's appointment to the UK Board of Trade. Nothing significant to report. The genesis of the question was Frances' preparation for Estimates, and the questions Caroline received.

Golds

**Darren Goldie** | Assistant Secretary  
 Global Interests Branch | National Security Division  
 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
 m. s 22

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Friday, 23 October 2020 3:20 PM  
**To:** Goldie, Darren  
**Cc:** s 22  
**Subject:** Phone Message - John Geering - DFAT ~~[SEC-OFFICIAL]~~

~~OFFICIAL~~

Hi Golds

**Who:** John Geering

**From:** DFAT

**Contact No:** s 22

**RE:** Senate Estimates – DFAT role of Abbot on Board of Trade (Frances Adamson wants to know when and who). Can you please give John a call and discuss.

Regards

s 22

s 22

s 22

International Division

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

p. s 22

m. s 22

e. s 22

One National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600 | PO Box 6500 CANBERRA ACT 2600



**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** [Goldie, Darren](#); s 22  
**Subject:** Fwd: QoNs 0094-0102 - Request to move to International Division ~~[SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]~~  
**Date:** Wednesday, 28 October 2020 8:38:51 AM

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s 22

Could you have a look at the Abbott QoN please?

Thanks

s 22

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** s 22  
**Date:** 28 October 2020 at 8:22:10 am AEDT  
**To:** s 22, s 22, s 22  
**Cc:** "Brazier, Roderick" <[Roderick.Brazier@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Roderick.Brazier@pmc.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** FW: QoNs 0094-0102 - Request to move to International Division ~~[SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]~~

~~OFFICIAL:Sensitive~~

Hi s 22

An early indication of the QoNs we may be receiving through the system re s 22 and Abbott.

The Abbott one I thought Stephanie read onto the record? When the official transcript is released we can check.

Cheers

s 22

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**From:** Senate Estimates <[Senate.Estimates@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Senate.Estimates@pmc.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 27 October 2020 3:30 PM  
**To:** Senate Estimates <[Senate.Estimates@pmc.gov.au](mailto:Senate.Estimates@pmc.gov.au)>; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: QoNs 0094-0102 - Request to move to International Division ~~[SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]~~

~~OFFICIAL:Sensitive~~

Good afternoon International Division

In addition to the below could you please confirm that you are willing accept responsibility for responding to the following Questions on Notice taken at Budget Estimates on 20 October 2020. s 47E(d)

Thank you

s 22 | Adviser  
Parliamentary | Ministerial and Parliamentary Support Branch  
Ministerial Support Division | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
p. s 22  
e. s 22 | [www.dpmc.gov.au](http://www.dpmc.gov.au) |

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**From:** Senate Estimates <[Senate.Estimates@dpmc.gov.au](mailto:Senate.Estimates@dpmc.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 27 October 2020 3:17 PM  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** Senate Estimates <[Senate.Estimates@dpmc.gov.au](mailto:Senate.Estimates@dpmc.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** QoNs 0094-0100 - Request to move to International Division  
~~[SEC OFFICIAL:Sensitive]~~

~~OFFICIAL:Sensitive~~

Good afternoon International Division

Can you please confirm that you are willing accept responsibility for responding to the following Questions on Notice taken at Budget Estimates on 20 October 2020.

0094	The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	National Security Division	Wong	United Kingdom – Australia Fair Trade Agreement	<p><b>Senator WONG:</b> .... Mr Abbott says he'll be providing advice to the UK government on its post-Brexit trade deals. Is PM&amp;C aware as to whether this would include the UK-Australia FTA?</p> <p><b>Ms Millar:</b> The advice that we've received from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade—and, in fact, through the UK government's Department for International Trade—was that advisers to the Board of Trade have no direct role in striking trade deals.</p> <p><b>Senator WONG:</b> When did you seek this advice?</p> <p><b>Ms Millar:</b> Actually, Senator, I'm not aware. My briefing says this, and I did ask.</p> <p><b>Senator WONG:</b> I'd like to know why it was sought and when it was sought.</p> <p><b>Ms Millar:</b> We can take that on</p>	Hansard, 20 October 2020, page 94
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notice for you.



Kind regards

s 22 | Adviser  
Correspondence and Briefs (MCaB) | Ministerial and Parliamentary Support Branch  
Ministerial Support of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
s 22  
s 22  
Barton ACT 2600 | PO Box 6500 CANBERRA ACT 2600  
s 22

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22  
**Cc:** Goldie, Darren; s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** FW: FOR ACTION Draft Index of Questions on notice - Budget Estimates hearing 20 October 2020  
~~[OEC - OFFICIAL]~~  
**Date:** Thursday, 29 October 2020 12:05:44 PM  
**Attachments:** [DRAFT PM&C Portfolio Index - Budget Estimates October 2020.docx](#)

~~OFFICIAL~~

s 22

thanks very much for coordinating the Budget estimates follow-up.

as discussed, three questions below for A&E. s 22

s 22

s 22

many thanks

s 22

0092	The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	PMO	Wong	Mr Abbott's visit to the United Kingdom and Europe	<b>Senator WONG:</b> ... Senator Cormann, can you tell me whether the PMO provided any assistance or facilitation to Mr Abbott in relation to his recent visit to the UK and Europe? <b>Senator Cormann:</b> Not that I'm aware, but I'd have to take that on notice.
0093	The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	PMO	Wong	Mr Abbott's nomination to Boards of Trade	<b>Senator WONG:</b> Is the PMO aware of his appointment to the UK Board of Trade? <b>Senator Cormann:</b> I've obviously read about it in the media and I'm sure so has the PMO. <b>Senator WONG:</b> Did he have any discussion with the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's staff about— <b>Senator Cormann:</b> Not that I'm aware, but— <b>Senator WONG:</b> about his intent to nominate for another country's board of trade? <b>Senator Cormann:</b> Not that I'm aware. <b>Senator WONG:</b> Can you take that on notice? <b>Senator Cormann:</b> Sure.

Clearly, Mr Abbott is an individual in the same way Ms Gillard, Mr Rudd and Mr Howard are individuals, who, of course, are quite entitled to pursue opportunities in their private life after they have left the department. I'm not quite sure what sort of possible responsibilities you believe are relevant here in terms of Prime Minister Morrison.

**Senator WONG:** I just wondered if he'd told him, and if so—

**Senator Cormann:** As I say, I'm not aware. I'm not sure that it's—

**Senator WONG:** I've just asked you to take it on notice.

s 22



**Sent:** Thursday, 29 October 2020 10:01 AM

**To:** s 22

s 22

s 22

s 22

**Cc:** s 47E(d)

**Subject:** FOR ACTION Draft Index of Questions on notice - Budget Estimates hearing 20 October 2020 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

~~OFFICIAL~~

~~OFFICIAL~~

Dear Colleagues

Attached is the current draft version of the Index of Questions on Notice (QoNs) from the Budget Estimates hearings held on Tuesday, 20 October 2020. Please advise by **COB 30 October 2020** to s 47E(d), if you consider:

- any of the questions were answered during the hearing/s and should be removed from the index
- if there are any questions missing.

Please note, Senators can continue to submit written QoNs. s 47E(d)  
s 47E(d) Please also note, questions taken on notice at the hearing are unable to be transferred to another department or agency. Written questions are able to be transferred.

Any questions about the Senate Estimates QoNs process can be directed to the Senate Estimates team at s 47E(d)

Thanks,  
Jarrod

**Jarrod McAlister** | A/g Assistant Secretary  
Ministerial & Parliamentary Support Branch  
Ministerial Support Division | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
p s 22 | m s 22

FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BUDGET ESTIMATES 2020–21  
PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET PORTFOLIO

Q No.	Department or Agency	Division	Senator	Broad Topic	Question	Hansard p. no. <i>or</i> Written Q	Date Rec'd	Date Tabled
s 22								
0092	The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	PMO	Wong	Mr Abbott’s visit to the United Kingdom and Europe	<b>Senator WONG:</b> ... Senator Cormann, can you tell me whether the PMO provided any assistance or facilitation to Mr Abbott in relation to his recent visit to the UK and Europe? <b>Senator Cormann:</b> Not that I'm aware, but I'd have to take that on notice.	Hansard, 20 October 2020, page 94		
0093	The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	PMO	Wong	Mr Abbott’s nomination to Boards of Trade	<b>Senator WONG:</b> Is the PMO aware of his appointment to the UK Board of Trade? <b>Senator Cormann:</b> I've obviously read about it in the media and I'm sure so has the PMO. <b>Senator WONG:</b> Did he have any discussion with the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's staff about— <b>Senator Cormann:</b> Not that I'm aware, but— <b>Senator WONG:</b> about his intent to nominate for another country's board of trade?	Hansard, 20 October 2020, page 94		

FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BUDGET ESTIMATES 2020–21**  
**PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET PORTFOLIO**

Q No.	Department or Agency	Division	Senator	Broad Topic	Question	Hansard p. no. <i>or</i> Written Q	Date Rec'd	Date Tabled
					<p><b>Senator Cormann:</b> Not that I'm aware.</p> <p><b>Senator WONG:</b> Can you take that on notice?</p> <p><b>Senator Cormann:</b> Sure. Clearly, Mr Abbott is an individual in the same way Ms Gillard, Mr Rudd and Mr Howard are individuals, who, of course, are quite entitled to pursue opportunities in their private life after they have left the department. I'm not quite sure what sort of possible responsibilities you believe are relevant here in terms of Prime Minister Morrison.</p> <p><b>Senator WONG:</b> I just wondered if he'd told him, and if so—</p> <p><b>Senator Cormann:</b> As I say, I'm not aware. I'm not sure that it's—</p> <p><b>Senator WONG:</b> I've just asked you to take it on notice.</p>			
0094	The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	International	Wong	Advice regarding trade deals	<p><b>Senator WONG:</b> .... Mr Abbott says he'll be providing advice to the UK government on its post-Brexit trade deals. Is PM&amp;C aware as to whether this would include the UK-Australia FTA?</p> <p><b>Ms Millar:</b> The advice that we've received from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade—and, in fact, through the UK government's Department for International Trade—was that advisers to the Board of Trade have no direct role in striking trade deals.</p> <p><b>Senator WONG:</b> When did you seek this advice?</p> <p><b>Ms Millar:</b> Actually, Senator, I'm not aware. My briefing says this, and I did ask.</p> <p><b>Senator WONG:</b> I'd like to know why it was sought and when it was sought.</p> <p><b>Ms Millar:</b> We can take that on notice for you.</p>	Hansard, 20 October 2020, page 94		

s 22

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
**Cc:** [Goldie, Darren](#); s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
**Subject:** RE: FOR ACTION Draft Index of Questions on notice - Budget Estimates hearing 20 October 2020  
~~SEC - OFFICIAL~~  
**Date:** Thursday, 29 October 2020 1:58:56 PM

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~~OFFICIAL~~

thanks s 22

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**From:** s 22  
**Sent:** Thursday, 29 October 2020 1:29 PM  
**To:** s 22 ; s 22  
s 22  
**Cc:** Goldie, Darren <Darren.Goldie@pmc.gov.au>; s 22  
s 22 ; s 22 ; s 22  
s 22 ; s 22  
s 22  
**Subject:** RE: FOR ACTION Draft Index of Questions on notice - Budget Estimates hearing 20 October 2020  
~~SEC - OFFICIAL~~

~~OFFICIAL~~

Thanks s 22

s 47E(d)

s 47E(d) s 22 , s 22  
s 22

Ideally if we could have all these ready to run past Rod late next week that would be great.

Cheers

s 22

Duplicate

**Question on notice no. 1887**

**Senator Timothy Ayres:** asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister on 3 September 2020—

With reference to the candidacy of former Prime Minister, Mr Tony Abbott, for the role of Joint President of the United Kingdom Board of Trade:

1. Have any discussions taken place between representatives of the Australian Government and the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy in advance of the announcement of the appointment; if so, when and with whom did the discussions take place.
2. Has the Prime Minister made any representations to the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, on how many occasions, when and by whom were representations made.
3. Has the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet made any representations to the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, on how many occasions, when and by whom were they made.
4. Have any Australian Government resources been applied to support Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, what resources have been applied and what has been the total cost of supporting Mr Abbott's candidacy.

~~OFFICIAL~~**Questions on Notice Summary: October 2020**

2020

Number	Question	Response as submitted
<i>Stranded Australians</i>		

s 22

~~OFFICIAL~~

s 22

*Tony Abbott's appointment to the UK Government's Board of Trade (4 September)*

1887	<p>1. Have any discussions taken place between representatives of the Australian Government and the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy in advance of the announcement of the appointment; if so, when and with whom did the discussions take place.</p> <p>2. Has the Prime Minister made any representations to the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, on how many occasions, when and by whom were representations made.</p> <p>3. Has the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet made any representations to the UK Government about Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, on how many occasions, when and by whom were they made.</p> <p>4. Have any Australian Government resources been applied to support Mr Abbott's candidacy for the role; if so, what resources have been applied and what has been the total cost of supporting Mr Abbott's candidacy.</p>	<p>The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is not aware of any discussions, representations or resources in support of the candidacy of former Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott for the role of Joint President of the United Kingdom Board of Trade.</p> <p>Appointments to the United Kingdom Board of Trade are a matter for the government of the United Kingdom.</p>
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~~For Official Use Only~~

INTERNATIONAL DIVISION  
 GLOBAL INTERESTS BRANCH  
 Budget Estimates – OCTOBER 2020

MINISTERIAL AND DEPARTMENTAL BRIEF

	TOPIC	SPEAKER	INTL POC
17.	<p>Candidacies and appointments<sup>s 22</sup>  <sup>s 22</sup> ; Tony Abbott</p> <p><sup>s 22</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Government announces new Board of Trade, 4 September 2020, UK Government</i></li> <li>- <i>Tony Abbott's appointment to Britain's Board of Trade prompts questions from Labor party about foreign interference, 5 September 2020, ABC News</i></li> </ul> <p><sup>s 22</sup></p>	RB	<sup>s 22</sup>

Timeline of key events and decisions  
 (Blue entries = PM&C action)

<sup>s 22</sup>~~For Official Use Only~~



**Tony Abbott Timeline**

Date	Action
s 22	
14 September 2020	[To be updated prior to Estimates hearing] The scope of the 7 September FOI request to PM&C/DFAT is further refined to apply only to any correspondence from 1 January 2020 onwards. s 22
s 22	
7 September 2020	[Will be updated prior to Estimates hearing] PM&C and DFAT receive an FOI request from s 47F at s 47G(1)(a), seeking any correspondence between Mr Abbott and PM&C/DFAT regarding the proposed role. Darren Goldie, Assistant Secretary, Global Interests Branch, is the delegate for this request.
s 22	

<b>4 September 2020</b>	UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson defended Mr Abbott's appointment at a press conference, saying he (Mr Abbott) was "elected by the people of the great liberal democratic nation of Australia", which "speaks for itself". He said he "can't be expected" to agree with the views of all people working for the UK Government.
<b>4 September 2020</b>	Prominent UK actor Sir Ian McKellen released an open letter against Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, calling on Britain's arts community and environment and equality activists to support and sign it.
<b>4 September 2020</b>	The UK Government officially announced Mr Abbott's appointment as an adviser to the Board of Trade, along with 15 other appointments.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	UK Opposition Leader Sir Keir Starmer said "I don't think he (Mr Abbott) is the right man for the job" in a BBC interview.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott met with UK Home Secretary Priti Patel.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	PM&C and DFAT received a Question on Notice from Senator Timothy Ayres asking about Australian Government involvement in Mr Abbott's appointment. A response is currently being prepared.
<b>1 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott appeared (virtually) before the UK House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee. He gave evidence at an inquiry into "The UK's Role in Strengthening Multilateral Organisations".
<b>1 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott gave a keynote speech in London at the Policy Exchange, a UK thinktank – titled "Australia and the Coronavirus Crisis".

<b>27 September 2020</b>	The Sydney Morning Herald reported multiple federal politicians questioning Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, including independent MP Zali Steggall, and Greens leader Adam Bandt, who called for Mr Abbott's parliamentary pension to be "stripped". The report noted at the time of filing that Mr Abbott was in Italy and was returning to London to give a keynote speech.
<b>26 August 2020</b>	The Prime Minister was asked in a media conference about reports of Mr Abbott's appointment. The Prime Minister responded "A good hire! I think that's a good hire!" s 22
<b>26 August 2020</b>	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> reported that Mr Abbott and UK Trade Secretary Liz Truss had breakfast together in London on

	25 August 2020, reportedly “to confirm his new role advising the British Trade Board”. s 22 s 22
26 August 2020	<i>The Sun</i> newspaper reported that Mr Abbott had been appointed as the “co-president” of the UK’s Board of Trade.
25 August 2020	[Not public] The High Commissioner to London hosted a breakfast attended by Mr Abbott and UK Trade Secretary Liz Truss.
23 August 2020	Mr Abbott was photographed attending the Wales Open golf tournament.

s 47E(d)



s 47C, s 47E(d)

## **Background**

**UK Board of Trade role**

The Board of Trade comprises senior figures from business, academia and government. Board members and advisers meet quarterly. The Board's primary role is to help the UK make a stronger case for free trade on the international stage, at a time of increased protectionism. The Board will engage extensively with industry, communities, farmers and consumer groups across the UK to help inform the development of an independent trade policy. In the official media release announcing the Board appointments, the Department of International Trade noted that advisers to the Board will have no direct role in striking trade deals.

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	constructive role facilitating new trade deals between Britain and other countries, including Australia.”
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<b>1 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott gave a keynote speech in London at the Policy Exchange, a UK thinktank – titled “Australia and the Coronavirus Crisis”.
<b>27 August 2020</b>	In an interview with ABC radio, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs, said that Mr Abbott would be required to comply with Australia’s foreign

	influence legislation if he was officially appointed to the advisory role.
<b>27 August 2020</b>	The <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> reported multiple federal politicians questioning Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, including independent MP Zali Steggall and Greens leader Adam Bandt, who called for Mr Abbott's parliamentary pension to be "stripped". The report noted at the time of filing that Mr Abbott was in Italy and was returning to London to give a keynote speech.
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Rod Brazier First Assistant Secretary	International Division	<sup>s 22</sup> [REDACTED]	<sup>s 22</sup> [REDACTED]
<sup>s 22</sup> [REDACTED]	Global Interests Branch	<sup>s 22</sup> [REDACTED]	
Consultation	Attorney-General's Department	Department of Home Affairs	DFAT (including London Post)

## **Key Documents**

Attachment A	“Tony Abbott’s appointment to Britain’s Board of Trade prompts questions from Labor party about foreign interference”, ABC News, 5 September 2020
Attachment B	Statement from the Hon Tony Abbott AC on appointment to the UK Board of Trade, 5 September 2020
Attachment C	“Government announces new Board of Trade”, UK Government press release, 4 September 2020
Attachment D	Mr Abbott’s evidence to the UK Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry into “The UK’s role in strengthening multilateral organisations”, 1 September 2020
Attachment E	“Abbott’s new British trade role called into question as gig exposes European jaunt”, Sydney Morning Herald, 27 August 2020



s 22



### **Background**

s 22



#### The Hon Tony Abbott

Former PM Tony Abbott was appointed as an adviser to the UK's Board of Trade on 4 September 2020. The unpaid role which involves promoting UK trade interests to other countries attracted criticism and questioning of his suitability to the role due to previous comments by Mr Abbott about women, LGBTQ rights and climate change.

s 22



s 22



**International Division**Key issues:

Issue	Page Number
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5. UK trade appointment (Tony Abbott)	18

s 47C, s 47E(d)

## **Background**

### **UK Board of Trade role**

The Board of Trade comprises senior figures from business, academia and government. Board members and advisers meet quarterly. The Board's primary role is to help the UK make a stronger case for free trade on the international stage, at a time of increased protectionism. The Board will engage extensively with industry, communities, farmers and consumer groups across the UK to help inform the development of an independent trade policy. In the official media release announcing the Board appointments, the Department of International Trade noted that advisers to the Board will have no direct role in striking trade deals.

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s 22	

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Rod Brazier First Assistant Secretary	International Division	s 22	s 22
s 22	Global Interests Branch	s 22	
Consultation	Attorney-General's Department	Department of Home Affairs	DFAT (including London Post)

## International Division

### Key issues:

Issue	Page Number
s 22	
5. UK trade appointment (Tony Abbott)	20

## **Background**

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Rod Brazier First Assistant Secretary	International Division	s 22	s 22
s 22	Global Interests Branch	s 22	
Consultation	Attorney-General's Department	Department of Home Affairs	DFAT (including London Post)

~~OFFICIAL~~

## Background

s 22

### UK Board of Trade role

The Hon Tony Abbott AC, former Prime Minister, was appointed as an adviser to the UK's Board of Trade on 4 September 2020.

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~~OFFICIAL~~

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Rod Brazier First Assistant Secretary	International Division	s 22	
s 22 s 22	Global Interests Branch	s 22	
Consultation	DFAT		



**SENATE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**BUDGET SENATE ESTIMATES – October 2020**

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

**INDEX OF MINISTERIAL BRIEFS**

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## International Division

### Key issues:

Issue	Page Number
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5. UK trade appointment (Tony Abbott)	18

s 47C, s 47E(d)

## **Background**

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<b>4 September 2020</b>	The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Mr Boris Johnson, defended Mr Abbott's appointment at a press conference, saying he (Mr Abbott) was "elected by the people of the great liberal democratic nation of Australia", which "speaks for itself". He said he "can't be expected" to agree with the views of all people working for the UK Government.
<b>4 September 2020</b>	Prominent UK actor Sir Ian McKellen released an open letter against Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, calling on Britain's arts community and environment and equality activists to support and sign it.
<b>4 September 2020</b>	The UK Government announced Mr Abbott's appointment as an adviser to the Board of Trade, along with fifteen other appointments. The official media release notes that advisers appointed to the Board will have no direct role in striking trade deals.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	UK Opposition Leader Sir Keir Starmer said "I don't think he (Mr Abbott) is the right man for the job" in a BBC interview.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott met with the United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Rt Hon Priti Patel MP.
<b>3 September 2020</b>	PM&C and DFAT received a Question on Notice from Senator Timothy Ayres asking about Australian Government involvement in Mr Abbott's appointment. A response was finalised on 7 October 2020.
<b>1 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott appeared (virtually) before the UK House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee. He gave evidence at an inquiry into "The UK's Role in Strengthening Multilateral Organisations".
<b>1 September 2020</b>	Mr Abbott gave a keynote speech in London at the Policy Exchange, a UK thinktank – titled "Australia and the Coronavirus Crisis".

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<b>27 August 2020</b>	The <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> reported multiple federal politicians questioning Mr Abbott's proposed appointment, including independent MP, Ms Zali Steggall OAM, MP and Leader of the Australian Greens, Mr Adam Bandt MP, who called for Mr Abbott's parliamentary pension to be "stripped". The report noted at the time of filing that Mr Abbott was in Italy and was returning to London to give a keynote speech.
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<b>26 August 2020</b>	<p>The Prime Minister was asked in a media conference about reports of Mr Abbott's appointment. The Prime Minister responded "A good hire! I think that's a good hire!" s 22</p> <p>s 22</p>
<b>26 August 2020</b>	<p><i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> reported that Mr Abbott and the United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Trade, the Rt Hon Elizabeth Turss MP, had breakfast together in London on 25 August 2020, reportedly "to confirm his new role advising the British Trade Board". s 22</p> <p>s 22</p> <p>s 22</p> <p>The article reported a Government spokesman (unidentified) as saying "the Australian Government was not made aware of the appointment until they read about it in the British press".</p>
<b>26 August 2020</b>	<p><i>The Sun</i> newspaper reported that Tony Abbott had been appointed as the "co-president" of the UK's Board of Trade.</p>
<b>25 August 2020</b>	<p>[Post's hosting of breakfast not public] The High Commissioner to London hosted a breakfast attended by Mr Abbott and the UK Secretary of State for International Trade.</p>
<b>23 August 2020</b>	<p>Mr Abbott was photographed attending the Wales Open golf tournament.</p>

Rod Brazier First Assistant Secretary	International Division	s 22	s 22
s 22	Global Interests Branch	s 22	
Consultation	Attorney-General's Department	Department of Home Affairs	DFAT (including London Post)