



Transcript

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Event: Andrew McKellar interview with Greg Jennett, ABC News Afternoon Briefing.

Speakers: Andrew McKellar, chief executive Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Greg Jennett, host ABC News Afternoon Briefing.

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E&OE

Greg Jennett, host ABC News Afternoon Briefing: Andrew McKellar, good morning there in Mumbai. Afternoon Briefing time as normal here in Canberra. We've heard a lot from the political representatives, the prime minister and others, about their purpose. Take us inside the business delegation of which you are a member. What is the program to pitch team Australia to India?

Andrew McKellar, chief executive Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: Hi, Greg. Great to be with you. Look, it's a busy program over a couple of days. We have, I think, a very strong delegation of Australian business representatives here. It's great to have the support of the Australian government, as you say, it really is about team Australia. India is a very rapidly growing market. It's an essential part of Australia's strategy to diversify its trade and economic relations in the region. Of course, we've seen the difficulties that have been encountered in recent years with China. But an important part of diversifying our opportunities is to build this relationship with India. So, it's a rapidly growing market for us. We are here really to engage over the next couple of days to see how we can grow Australia's exports, deepen that trade and investment relationship between the two countries, and it's also about people as well. That's an important part of the objective here.

Greg: And is it your expectation as a sort of down payment of good faith in this developing trade relationship that actual, tangible commercial deals will be clinched as part of this visit?

Andrew: Well, I think there are some very important things that can come out of this. As I say, on the people side, I think that's one of the most fundamental things. India is a very rapidly growing source of tourism for Australia, a major export industry for us. And international students, the number of international students coming back into Australia now has risen again very rapidly, and it's continuing to grow. So, things that we can do here, I think, over the next couple of days are agree how we can make it easier for that exchange of people between the two economies. Recognition of things like qualifications and skills, that's going to be fundamentally important. I know that the governments have been talking about these issues and let's see if we can make some progress again in the next couple of days.

Greg: So is this a reference to streamlining visa processes or permanent migration arrangements? What sort of things are you looking at there?

Andrew: Certainly, I think both of those things are important. So the visa processes, streamlining that, making it easier for the exchanges between the two countries. That's something that's very much on the agenda. I heard one of the significant business leaders here this morning talking about exactly that issue with the Trade Minister, Senator Farrell. So it's very much on business' agenda to be pushing forward on those issues because it's a huge opportunity and we're seeing that market growing very rapidly.

Greg: I think overwhelmingly, and this wouldn't be a surprise to anyone, the 25-member business delegation on this trip represents the larger end of the business scale in Australia, top end of town almost, blue chip companies, major educational institutions. As you take it down a level to medium or even smaller sized enterprises in Australia, do they need to increase their outreach to India as a market?

Andrew: Well, that's one of the reasons that I'm participating so we have that coverage. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, we are working with our members, with business, in terms of the trade that has been underwritten and particularly the exports into India. In the period since the free trade agreement came into force at the end of December last year, just in one month, \$2.5 billion worth of trade was underwritten in that period of time. It is important that we do look at how those opportunities can flow through, not just at the big end of town, but for a range of smaller, medium-sized businesses that are looking to open up some of those export opportunities. And again, this is where the human dimension: skills, access to labour that we critically need, this is where those opportunities exist.

Greg: Well, that's your purpose for being there on what I understand is a very hectic day taking in two Indian cities. So, Andrew McKellar, on that note, we better free you up to get on and pitch for team Australia. Thanks for joining us.

Andrew: Great, thanks very much, Greg.

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