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PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Submission:

I fully support the progress of an FTA with Malaysia.

As the CBD State Member for Perth, I have many constituents and much contact with the Malaysian community and particularly the Malaysian business community in Perth. I have also been approached by constituents who have business interests in Malaysia, or elsewhere in Asia, but would like more opportunity in Malaysia.

As you state in the Terms of Reference: "While there are a lot of complementarities between the two economies which already have relatively open markets, there are opportunities for improvement in the services sector and business and investment flows. Australia has significant levels of Malaysian investment (AUD6.2 billion) but the levels of Australian investment in Malaysia are relatively low (AUD485 million)."

I believe an important aspect of this FTA is the freeing up of employment and visa opportunities. While some benefits already exist due to Commonwealth links, there is much mutual benefit for an extension of freer employment for Australians and Malaysians in each other's countries. The original Colombo Plan provided for a big upskilling of Malaysian citizens through study in Australia. This "aid" has actually had a huge economic benefit back to Australia through increased tourism and residential property investment in WA because of familial links to our State.

I believe Australia needs to show equality by making it as easy and convenient for Malaysians to visit here, as it is for Australians to visit Malaysia. While tourist visas do not have to be applied for by Australians, Malaysians do need one to visit here, though the streamlined internet application process through travel agents does lessen the burden. However, this is an added deterrent to ease of tourism into WA and sends an unequal message to Malaysians.

Given that many Government jobs and contracts are no longer "life-time" appointments, both nations should look at not excluding each other's nationals from short-term employment contracts, particularly in skill-deficient areas.

Yours sincerely

JOHN HYDE M.L.A.
MEMBER FOR PERTH
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