

Legal profession among winners in Singapore-Australia FTA review

Australian lawyers and law schools have been rewarded with long-term market access certainty following a review of the Singapore-Australia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) completed today.

The announcement means that lawyers in both countries will benefit from a 'ratchet' mechanism that will lock-in the ongoing liberalisation of Singapore's legal services market.

It also means that for the first time, Singapore has agreed to recognise Juris Doctor (JD) degrees from ten Australian universities. This is in addition to current recognition of LLB degrees.

The President of the Law Council, Stuart Clark AM, said that today's announcement shows that SAFTA is a useful, 'living agreement' that can deliver enhanced market access outcomes for the Australian legal profession and their clients.

"Transnational trade and investment cannot take place in a legal vacuum," Mr Clark said.

"The role played by legal practitioners in providing business and commercial legal services is essential in facilitating all transnational trade and investment.

"Implementing meaningful market access for legal services providers is crucial if goods and service suppliers are to take full advantage of trade agreements," Mr Clark said.

The ten Australian universities that will have JD and LLB degrees recognised are: ANU, Flinders, Monash, Melbourne, Murdoch, New South Wales, Queensland, Sydney, Tasmania and Western Australia.

"In addition to providing increased opportunities for Australian law schools, there is real benefit for Singaporean nationals seeking to study law in Australia," Mr Clark said.

"Increasing opportunities for Singaporean students to study law in Australia will assist in the internationalisation of the legal sector in both countries. It will also expand people-to-people links that inevitably foster increased understanding and cooperation between the legal professions of both countries," Mr Clark said.

Looking forward, Mr Clark said that Singapore should continue to reduce restrictions on Australian and Singaporean lawyers working together to provide legal services in Singapore.

"This will be of keen interest to the Australian legal profession as the terms of Australia's Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Singapore are developed." Mr Clark said.

Patrick Pantano: Public Affairs

P. 02 6246 3715

E. Patrick.Pantano@lawcouncil.asn.au

Anil Lambert: Media

P. 0416 426 722

E. anil@hortonadvisory.com.au