



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 12, 2021

Ambassador Katherine Tai  
United States Trade Representative  
Executive Office of the President  
600 17<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Trade Representative Tai

We are writing to you as members of the Friends of Australia Caucus, a bipartisan group of members committed to strengthening and promoting the U.S.-Australia alliance. The caucus advances that mission through Congressional Delegations to Australia, regular meetings in D.C with visiting Australian officials, and constant communication with the Australian embassy on a wide array of issues.

This is a crucial moment for the alliance. The AUKUS security partnership represents a once in a generation opportunity to continue strengthening America's bonds with Australia. Sharing nuclear propulsion technology with Australia—something the U.S. has only done once before—is an unequivocal demonstration of our commitment to the region and our ally. Yet we must continue to advance this momentum.

At a time when many allies and partners in the region are facing increased threats stemming from attempted Chinese economic coercion, we urge your administration to engage with Australia to build on our 2005 Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in consultation with Congress. We heard the importance of this matter firsthand from Australian Trade minister Dan Tehan, who briefed the caucus on the potential benefits of a regional digital trade agreement earlier this year. An improved digital agreement would serve as an effective method to better connect like-minded nations with free market economies at a time of accelerating commercial digitization, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Currently, international digital transactions are greatly hindered by fragmented, nation by nation “rules of the road,” that can make even small purchases by consumers and small businesses difficult. Minister Tehan shared with us an example in which U.S. citizens who wanted to donate by credit card to charitable groups helping with Australian wildfire relief efforts in 2020 could not do so because of on the digital barriers between our two countries. Additionally, Australian consumers face challenging in accessing our markets due to incompatible electronic payment systems, emphasizing the importance of invoice systems that are capable of concurrently

docking with each other. Not only do individual consumers and small to medium-sized entities struggle with fragmented digital trade, but these groups are at increased risk for cyber hacking and privacy breaches as well. Given the U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement, the “Five Eyes” intelligence alliance, and now AUKUS, it is clear that digital trade barriers with Australia stand in the way of the national interest.

In 2020, Australia entered into a Digital Economy Agreement with Singapore, another key partner in the region. Although we understand the limitations of entering into any single-issue based trade agreement with another nation, we believe that the Australia-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement provides a strong template to work from. We firmly believe that continuing this economic engagement will attract bipartisan support and put our nation at the forefront of a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. A high standards U.S.-Australia data sharing and security agreement could serve as a model throughout the region, setting clear expectations when it comes to insulating data from the Chinese government and its thinly veiled proxies such as Huawei. In time, other nations in the region may even choose to join or “dock” onto the agreement.

Although future engagement with Australia should not be limited solely to the digital sphere, digital trade and data standards are increasingly vital subjects throughout the region. We would welcome the opportunity to engage with you on this and other topics that could be of benefit to the US-Australia alliance and all like-minded nations across the Indo-Pacific.

We stand ready to assist in such an endeavor.

cc President Joe Biden

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress



MIKE GALLAGHER  
Member of Congress



ED CASE  
Member of Congress



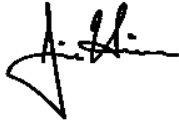
JIM COSTA  
Member of Congress



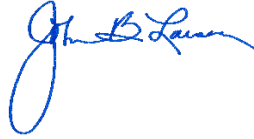
STEVE COHEN  
Member of Congress



BRIAN FITZPATRICK  
Member of Congress



JIM HIMES  
Member of Congress



JOHN LARSON  
Member of Congress



ED PERLMUTTER  
Member of Congress



ANTHONY GONZALEZ  
Member of Congress