



**For immediate release**

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**The Australian Services Roundtable congratulates and thanks Hon. Simon Crean, Minister for Trade for his strong leadership in the Services negotiations in Geneva**

The WTO Services Signaling Conference took place in Geneva on Saturday 26 July. The Australian Services Roundtable was represented in Geneva by Peter Walsh, ASR Company Secretary and Managing Director of Conformance Assessment Services.

“For a few days it looked as though Ministers were so bogged down in Geneva on Agriculture and Industrials that they might never get to convene the Conference on Services”, said Executive Director, Jane Drake-Brockman. “The Ministerial-level Conference was delayed a few days but persistent efforts, including notably on the part of the Australian Trade Minister meant that critical discussion on Services, an equivalent pillar in the Doha Round, finally took place and successfully so.”

“This is the first time in the seven years of the Doha Round, that we have witnessed a Ministerial level discussion devoted to Services. It has been a long time coming, and it wouldn’t have happened without Simon Crean’s determination to push the Services agenda along. A strong outcome on Doha really matters for services export performance, especially in Asia”, said Ms Drake-Brockman.

“The meeting was essentially political in nature, designed to allow WTO members to signal their preparedness to liberalise beyond their current services offers. Australia took the lead, signaling its own preparedness to achieve trade reforms in a number of services sectors and across a number of modes of supply, if others do the same. Other WTO members did respond and what was signaled was evidently sufficient to enable discussions on Agriculture and Industrials to reconvene this week.”

“Mr Crean has our full support”, said Ms Drake-Brockman. “He has played a central role all week, participating in the small group of 7 countries which has sprung up to try to thrash out a deal on Doha.” “The negotiating environment remains very vulnerable. It may take a few more days till we know where things stand more broadly. What we do know it that Australia has put its best foot forward on Services.” Ms Drake-Brockman said “The Australian Government is obviously working very hard to deliver commercially meaningful outcomes for Australian services exporters.”

“ASR wants the Doha Round brought to a conclusion fast. As set out in our submission to the Mortimer review on Export Policies and Programmes, we are impatient to get on with a post-Doha generation of services negotiations.”

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