



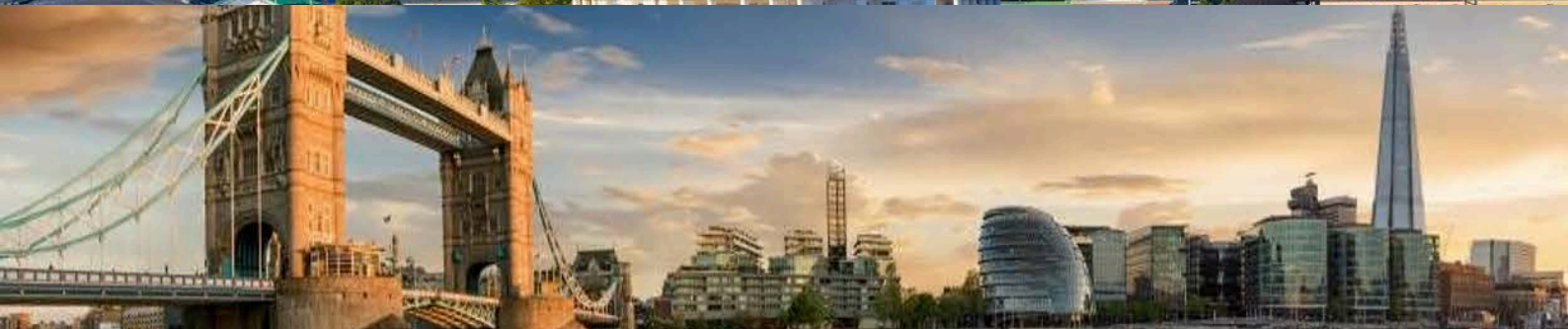
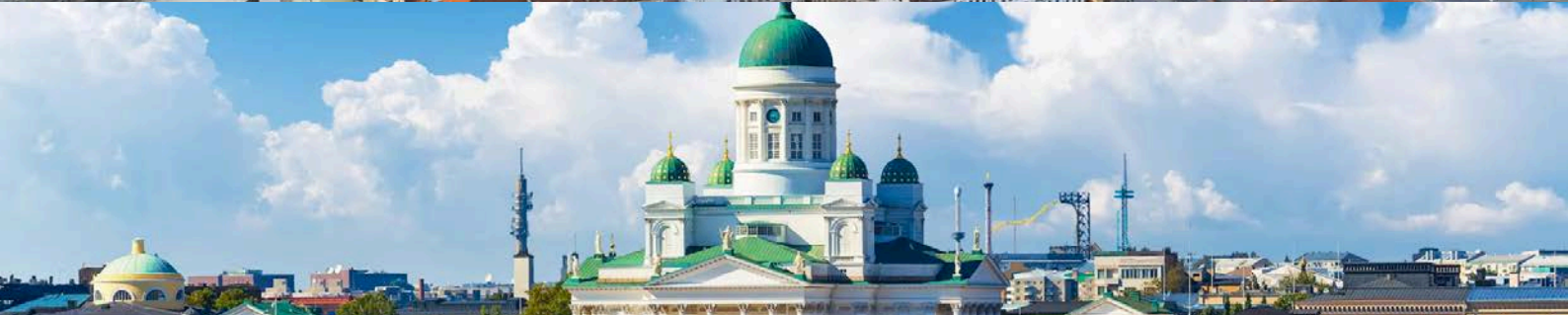
European Australian
Business Council

EABC Business Mission to Europe 2026

Mission Report

Brussels, Berlin, Helsinki 21-26 June

London 29-30 June





European Australian
Business Council

SENTINEL CON

01.

Overview

02.

Programme Summary

03.

Delegate Profiles

04.

Delegate Organisations

05.

Mission Supporting Partners

01. Overview

EABC Annual Business Mission to Europe

Each year, the EABC undertakes a high-level Business Mission to Europe as an initiative to strengthen bilateral relationships with European political leaders, institutions, officials, peak business and industry associations, policy think tanks, universities, and research institutions. The delegation travels to Brussels and London, as the political capitals of the European Union (EU), and the United Kingdom (UK), and to other key political and commercial centers in Europe.

Since 2006, the missions have included destinations such as Amsterdam, Antwerp, Austria, Berlin, Bern, Bratislava, Brussels, Budapest, Copenhagen, Dublin, Frankfurt, Geneva, Hamburg, Helsinki, Istanbul, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Malmö, Milan, Munich, the Netherlands, Paris, Rome, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Strasbourg, The Hague, Toulouse, Venice, Vienna, Warsaw, and Zurich.

This year, the delegation travelled to **Brussels, Berlin, and Helsinki**, with a subsequent programme in **London**. A number of delegates were also delighted to participate in events hosted by EABC Partners the **Group of Eight** and **Monash University** at Monash's Campus in **Prato, Italy**.

Mission Objectives & Supporters

The Mission provides a unique platform for Australian business leaders to engage directly with European government and private sector thought leaders on the issues shaping Europe's economic, political and strategic future.

Priority areas for engagement include geopolitical and economic developments, trade and investment, industrial policy, research and innovation, energy transition and decarbonisation, critical minerals and strategic value chains, defence and security, digital technologies, cybersecurity, infrastructure, transport and mobility, and the evolving regulatory environment.

Against a backdrop of heightened geopolitical tension, increasing economic fragmentation, and intensifying global competition, the 2026 Mission offered a timely opportunity to better understand how Europe is responding to a rapidly changing international landscape. Across the EU and UK, governments, businesses and institutions are seeking to strengthen competitiveness, enhance resilience, accelerate the energy transition, secure critical technologies and strategic supply chains, and bolster defence and security capabilities.

The Mission also took place at a watershed moment in Australia's relationships with both the EU and the UK. In March 2026, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced the successful conclusion of negotiations on the **EU-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**, the establishment of an **EU-Australia Security and Defence Partnership (SDP)**, and Australia's intention to associate with **Horizon Europe** from 2027. At the same time, Australia and the United Kingdom continue to deepen cooperation through **AUKUS**, the **UK-Australia FTA**, and growing collaboration in areas including defence industrial capability, critical technologies, artificial intelligence, research, and investment. Together, these developments reflect a broader strengthening of Australia's engagement with Europe across economic, strategic, technological and security domains.

In this context, the Mission sought to support the continued deepening of Australia's engagement with Europe and identify practical opportunities arising from this new phase of cooperation. Delegates emphasised the importance of swiftly translating recent EU-Australia and UK-Australia commitments into tangible outcomes for business, research and strategic collaboration. Discussions throughout the programme highlighted significant opportunities to expand cooperation in defence and security, critical minerals, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, digital technologies, research and innovation, reflecting the growing alignment of Australian, European and UK priorities.



01. Overview

These missions also provide valuable opportunities for Australian business and organisational leaders to work alongside **Australian Government representatives in Europe** to promote Australia's economic strengths, showcase national capabilities, and identify new opportunities for trade, investment, research, and strategic cooperation.

The success of the 2026 Mission was made possible through the generous support of the **Australian Missions in Brussels, Berlin, Helsinki, and London; Austrade, Treasury, and Defence** representatives across Europe; the **Delegation of the EU to Australia**; and the **Embassies, Trade Commissions, and bilateral Chambers of Commerce of Germany, Finland, and the UK**.

The delegation was honoured to be joined for the 2026 Mission by EABC Honorary Board Member and Ambassador of the EU to Australia, **HE Mr Gabriele Visentin**, whose participation further underscored the strength and importance of the EU–Australia relationship.

We are particularly grateful for the support and hospitality extended by **HE General Angus Campbell AO DSC** in Brussels; **HE Ms Natasha Smith** in Berlin; **HE Ms Frances Sagala** and **HE Mr Arto Haapea** in Helsinki; and **HE the Hon Jay Weatherill AO** and Deputy High Commissioner **Elisabeth Bowes PSM** in London.

Mission Leaders & Delegates

The 2026 Mission was led by EABC Deputy Chairs **Professor the Hon Brendan O'Connor** (RMIT University) and **Vicki Thomson** (The Group of Eight), together with EABC CEO **Jason Collins** and EABC COO **Jo Johns**.

The delegation was comprised of senior representatives from a diverse range of organisations and sectors including EABC Corporate Council Member **Philip Aiken AM** (Fleetwood Strategy); **David Bateman** (NAB); **Angus Barker** (Vulcan Energy Resources); **Cameron Bettany** (Volvo Group Australia); **Dr Matthew Brown** (The Group of Eight); **Neil Duncan** (NAB); **Professor Bronwyn Fox AO** (The University of NSW and German-Australian Chamber of Industry and Commerce); EABC Corporate Council Member **David Gall** (National Reconstruction Fund Corporation); **Dr Jens Goennemann** (Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre); EABC Chair Emeritus **Hon Nick Greiner AC** (Gabane); EABC Board Member **Dr Paul Grimes PSM** (Austrade); EABC Board Member **Peter Halliday** (Siemens ANZ); **Professor Cecilia Hewlett** (Monash University); EABC Corporate Council Member **Belinda Hutchison AC** (Thales Australia); **Constantinos J Kittos** (Asuria Australia); EABC Board Member **Andrew Low** (Australian British Chamber of Commerce); **Sid Marris** (Minerals Council of Australia); EABC Board Member **Andrew McCallum** (Meat & Livestock Australia); **Professor Dane McCamey** (The University of NSW); **Gregg McClymont** (IFM Investors); EABC Corporate Council Member **John McMurtrie AM** (Rise Early Learning); **Andres Reith** (BDO Australia); **Keith Ritchie** (Siemens ANZ); **Professor Mike Ryan** (The University of Sydney); **Ben Saint** (Nokia); EABC Board Member **John Weber** (Frequentis Australasia); EABC Board Member **David Whiteley** (IFM Investors); and **Tracey Wright** (The Group of Eight).

At various stages in the programme we were delighted to be joined by from colleagues in post from **Austrade, Investment NSW**, the **Australian Treasury**, and the **Australian Department of Defence**.

The delegation was also accompanied by EABC Secretariat team members **Caragh Heugh Johnson** and **Sarah Kostoglou**, Group of Eight support by **Paul Fede**, and with Sydney support from **Manon Koopman**, **Gigi De Leon**, **Sharmini Caldwell**, and **Clancy Gleeson**.



[EABC Business Mission 2026 Photo Gallery](#)

01. Overview

About the EABC

The European Australian Business Council (EABC) is a peak business organisation dedicated to advancing trade, investment, innovation, and institutional cooperation between Australia and Europe. The EABC plays a leading role in fostering dialogue between business, government, and institutional leaders across Australia and Europe, including the European Union (EU) and its Member States, the United Kingdom (UK), Switzerland, Norway, and other key partners, to strengthen economic ties and deepen bilateral engagement.

As an independent, private sector-led organisation, the EABC works closely with Australian and European diplomatic missions, trade and investment agencies, international organisations, bilateral chambers of commerce, and other peak business associations to promote greater cooperation and connectivity between Australia and Europe.

Europe is one of Australia's most significant economic partners. Collectively, the EU, UK, Switzerland, Norway, and other European economies account for annual two-way trade exceeding A\$155 billion and total two-way investment stocks of more than A\$3.7 trillion.

The EABC works to bring greater priority and focus to this vital relationship by strengthening business, investment, research, and innovation links between Australia and Europe. The Council advocates for the modernisation of the bilateral architecture, the removal of unnecessary barriers to trade and investment, and the creation of regulatory and commercial frameworks that support the flow of ideas, talent, technology, goods and services, and high-quality capital.

In an increasingly complex geopolitical and economic environment, the case for closer Australia–Europe cooperation has never been stronger. Strengthening economic resilience, diversifying markets and supply chains, accelerating the energy transition, fostering innovation, and enhancing security and defence capabilities will increasingly depend on deeper collaboration between trusted partners. The EABC is committed to ensuring Australia and Europe realise the full potential of this strategically important relationship.



02. Programme Summary

Brussels

Sunday 21 June

The EABC's 2026 Business Mission to Europe began in **Brussels** on Sunday led by co-deputy chairs **Professor the Hon Brendan O'Connor** and **Vicki Thomson**. The Mission took place against a backdrop of significant momentum in the EU–Australia relationship, following the successful conclusion of EU–Australia FTA and Horizon Europe negotiations, the establishment of a Security and Defence Partnership, and continued progress on the Critical Minerals Partnership.

The programme commenced with a briefing and working lunch hosted by Australia's Ambassador to the EU, Belgium, Luxembourg, and NATO, **HE General Angus Campbell AO DSC**. The discussion provided insights into an EU navigating a convergence of geopolitical, economic, and technological challenges, including Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, strategic competition with China, uncertainty in the transatlantic security environment, industrial competitiveness pressures, energy security concerns, and the need for more resilient supply chains.

Ambassador Campbell outlined three broad priorities shaping Europe's response: strengthening the Union through deeper integration, Single Market reform, connectivity, and enlargement; restoring competitiveness through reindustrialisation, strategic technologies, and reducing critical dependencies; and enhancing security and resilience through increased defence investment, industrial cooperation, and initiatives such as the €150 billion SAFE programme and the wider ReArm Europe/Readiness 2030 agenda. The discussion also covered the growing importance of EU–Australia cooperation, Australia's engagement with NATO, deepening EU–NATO cooperation, and the outlook for the forthcoming NATO Summit in Ankara. Delegates gained valuable insights into how Europe is seeking to build a more competitive, secure, and resilient future while strengthening partnerships with trusted countries such as Australia.

The delegation was subsequently briefed by **Dr Paul Grimes PSM**, CEO of Austrade and EABC Board Member, alongside the EABC Secretariat. Dr Grimes outlined Austrade's strategic priorities across key European markets, highlighting Europe's growing importance to Australia's trade, investment, and diversification agenda. Discussions focused on the evolving global trading environment, opportunities arising from the EU–Australia FTA, and the role of Europe as a key pillar of Australia's economic diplomacy and international commercial engagement.

In the evening, the delegation travelled to the **Château de Releghem** to attend a reception generously hosted by longstanding EABC supporters **Paul and Sylvie de Moor** of **Kreglinger**. Delegates were honoured to hear remarks from **HE Mr Gabriele Visentin**, Ambassador of the EU to Australia, and **Professor the Hon Brendan O'Connor**. The EABC gratefully acknowledges the de Moor family's hospitality and longstanding support of the Council and its mission to strengthen Australia–Europe relations.

Monday 22 June

Monday commenced with an exchange with **Bernd Lange MEP**, Chair of the **European Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA)**. As one off the EU's most influential voices on trade policy, Mr Lange provided valuable insights into Europe's evolving approach to trade, economic security, and strategic partnerships. The discussion examined the profound shifts reshaping the global trading system, including growing economic nationalism, intensifying US–China competition, industrial overcapacity, supply chain resilience, and the increasing convergence of trade, industrial policy, and security objectives. Delegates gained insights into Europe's efforts to strengthen competitiveness, reduce strategic dependencies, and deepen engagement with trusted partners. Mr Lange also shared perspectives on the EU's broader trade agenda, including trade defence measures and negotiations with India, Indonesia, Mercosur, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines, highlighting the growing role of trade policy in advancing economic security and resilience objectives.



02. Programme Summary

Discussion of the EU–Australia FTA was a particular focus. Delegates discussed the pathway to implementation and advocated for signature of the Agreement by the end of 2026, followed by swift ratification and entry into force, enabling Australian and European businesses to begin realising the benefits of the Agreement as soon as possible.

The delegation then travelled to the **Berlaymont**, the European Commission headquarters, where they were hosted by **Ekaterina Zaharieva, European Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation**, alongside **Maria Cristina Russo, Deputy Director-General for Innovation, Prosperity and International Cooperation**. Commissioner Zaharieva provided valuable insights into the EU's efforts to strengthen competitiveness, industrial capability, and economic security through innovation. She highlighted Europe's growing focus on commercialisation, technology transfer, startups, and scale-ups, noting that the EU saw the creation of approximately 27,000 technology startups in 2025. Discussion also explored efforts to create a more innovation-friendly environment through regulatory simplification, improved access to finance, stronger research-industry linkages, and support for emerging technologies. The EU's €93.5 billion research and innovation programme, **Horizon Europe**, featured prominently in the discussion, with particular focus on **Australia's association from 1 January 2027**. Delegates received insights into Europe's increasing emphasis on technological sovereignty, research security, and dual-use innovation, as well as emerging discussions regarding the design of the next Framework Programme (FP10). The discussion underscored the importance of Australian researchers, universities, startups, businesses, and government agencies actively building partnerships, developing consortia, and identifying opportunities now so they are well positioned to rapidly leverage the full benefits of participation from day one. Broader opportunities to deepen EU–Australia collaboration in research, innovation, commercialisation, critical technologies, and resilient supply chains were also explored.

Over lunch, the delegation heard from **Suzanne Lynch, Bloomberg's** Brussels Bureau Chief, who provided valuable insights into the political and economic forces shaping decision-making in Brussels and across Europe. The discussion explored the growing influence of the second von der Leyen Commission, the increasing intersection of trade, competitiveness, economic security, and foreign policy. She reflected on the implications of shifting US trade policy, intensifying strategic competition with China, and growing concerns regarding industrial dependencies and supply chain resilience. Particular attention was given to Europe's competitiveness agenda, including efforts to reduce strategic vulnerabilities, strengthen industrial capability, and support the development of globally competitive European firms. Key findings from the [Mario Draghi Report](#) were highlighted, including the need to address fragmented capital markets, improve access to investment, scale innovative companies, and foster stronger European industrial champions. The exchange also explored support for Ukraine, the implications of enlargement, migration and demographic pressures, and the growing importance of artificial intelligence, advanced technologies, and economic security in shaping Europe's policy agenda.

Following lunch, the delegation travelled to **NATO Headquarters** for a series of high-level engagements focused on the Alliance's evolving approach to defence capability, innovation, industrial resilience, space, and partnerships. The visit provided valuable insights into how NATO is adapting to a rapidly deteriorating security environment and was particularly timely ahead of the forthcoming NATO Summit in Ankara.

First, the delegation was pleased to re-engage with **Tarja Jaakkola, Assistant Secretary General for Defence Industry, Innovation and Armaments**. Discussions focused on defence industry, innovation, capability generation, critical minerals, and industrial resilience. A key theme was NATO's increasing recognition that defence capability is as much an industrial challenge as a military one, requiring not only increased defence expenditure but also stronger supply chains, expanded manufacturing capacity, improved access to finance, accelerated adoption of emerging technologies, and deeper cooperation with industry and trusted partners such as Australia. The discussion also explored preparations for the forthcoming NATO Summit in Ankara, including NATO's focus on supporting allies to translate increased defence and security spending commitments into tangible industrial and military capability.





02. Programme Summary

The delegation then met with **Dr Daniel Hilgert** and **Borbála Tóth, NATO Senior Space Coordinators**, for a dialogue on the rapid evolution of space as an operational domain and the growing role of commercial space capabilities in supporting collective security. Discussions highlighted the increasing importance of resilience, interoperability, commercial partnerships, and trusted international cooperation, while identifying opportunities for deeper engagement with Australia's growing space sector.

The afternoon concluded with a briefing from **Ambassador Kevin Hamilton, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Partnerships**, who provided a strategic overview of NATO's evolving partnerships agenda and broader assessment of the international security environment. The discussion explored support for Ukraine, the growing alignment between authoritarian states, critical minerals and economic security, and cooperation with the Indo-Pacific Four (IP4).

The first day concluded with a reception at the **Ambassador's Residence** hosted by **Ambassador Angus Campbell AO DSC**. During the evening, delegates heard from **Tomas Baert, Trade Adviser to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen**, whose remarks provided valuable insights into how the President's office views the rapidly evolving EU–Australia relationship. Reflecting on President von der Leyen's March 2026 visit to Australia, Mr Baert highlighted the EU–Australia FTA, SDP, and Australia's forthcoming association with Horizon Europe as key pillars of an increasingly strategic relationship spanning trade, innovation, critical minerals, economic security, and resilience. His remarks reinforced the importance of trusted partnerships as the EU responds to growing geopolitical uncertainty and strategic dependencies, including the growing significance of critical minerals cooperation and the importance of expediting signature, ratification, and implementation of the FTA. The reception brought together representatives from across the EU institutions, diplomatic community, and Brussels policy ecosystem. **The EABC gratefully acknowledges the support and hospitality of Ambassador Campbell, Deputy Head of Mission David Brightling, and the entire Embassy team throughout the visit.**

Tuesday 23 June

The delegation was delighted to reengage with **Markus Beyrer**, Director General of **BusinessEurope**, and **Eleonora Catella**, Deputy Director, for an industry perspective on Europe's economic outlook, competitiveness agenda, and evolving business environment. As Europe's leading business federation, BusinessEurope provided valuable insights into the challenges facing European companies and the reforms required to support long-term growth and investment. Drawing on [BusinessEurope Economic Outlook Spring 2026](#), Mr Beyrer outlined the pressures facing European businesses, including elevated energy costs, demographic challenges, skills shortages, regulatory burdens, weak productivity growth, and increasing geopolitical uncertainty. A key theme throughout the discussion was that while trade agreements remain important, Europe's most pressing competitiveness challenge lies in addressing internal barriers to growth. Discussions focused on reducing regulatory complexity, accelerating permitting, improving access to capital, supporting company scale-up, and advancing initiatives such as the Savings and Investments Union, EU Inc., and the One Europe, One Market agenda. Mr Beyrer welcomed the successful conclusion of negotiations on the EU–Australia FTA, noting its importance in supporting diversification, strengthening engagement with trusted partners, and deepening commercial ties between businesses. The discussion also explored economic security, Europe's evolving relationship with China, critical minerals, energy policy, and the need for Europe to accelerate reform and strengthen its resilience.

Travelling to the **European Parliament**, the delegation was hosted by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) for a roundtable discussion on the growing strategic importance of EU–Australia cooperation across trade, security and defence, research and innovation, critical raw materials, and advanced technologies. The discussion was led by **Seán Kelly MEP**, Chair of the **Delegation for Relations with Australia and New Zealand (DANZ)**,



02. Programme Summary

and **Željana Zovko MEP**, the **Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)** Rapporteur on strategic political relations with Australia, and included **Dr Tobias Cremer MEP**, **Gabriele Bischoff MEP**, **Kris Van Dijk MEP**, and **Barry Cowen MEP**. The discussion provided valuable insights into parliamentary perspectives on the next phase of the EU–Australia relationship, including implementation of the EU–Australia FTA, the SDP, and Australia's forthcoming association with Horizon Europe. Participants highlighted the growing importance of trusted partnerships in response to geopolitical uncertainty, economic security challenges, and the need to diversify critical supply chains. Particular emphasis was placed on critical minerals, research and innovation, advanced manufacturing, critical technology and defence industrial cooperation as areas of increasing strategic alignment. Delegates emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum following the successful conclusion of the FTA negotiations, advocating for signature by the end of 2026 and timely ratification thereafter. The discussion demonstrated strong parliamentary support for deepening the EU–Australia relationship and a growing recognition that cooperation is increasingly being viewed through both economic and strategic lenses.

Over lunch, the delegation heard from **David O'Sullivan, EU Sanctions Envoy**, for a wide-ranging discussion on Europe's economic security agenda, support for Ukraine, and the geopolitical forces reshaping the international order. Drawing on his extensive experience across EU institutions and diplomacy, Mr O'Sullivan provided a strategic perspective on how Europe is responding to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, competition with China, and increasing uncertainty surrounding the future direction of the US. A significant focus of the discussion was the role of sanctions as a central pillar of Europe's response to Russia and the broader shift towards economic security as a core policy priority. He highlighted Europe's growing emphasis on resilience, strategic diversification, and reducing critical dependencies while maintaining an open and globally connected economy. He also reflected on the evolution of the EU–Australia relationship highlighting expanding cooperation across critical minerals, research and innovation, security, and economic resilience. The discussion explored Europe's longer-term strategic choices, including strengthening productivity, completing the Single Market, deepening capital market integration, and enhancing competitiveness in the face of demographic, technological, and geopolitical pressures. A recurring theme was that like-minded middle powers cannot address these challenges alone and that deeper cooperation between Australia and the EU will be increasingly important in supporting economic openness, democratic resilience, and the rules-based international order.

Across the Brussels programme, delegates benefited from direct engagement with senior policymakers, parliamentarians, officials, and thought leaders at the centre of European decision-making. As the world's largest single market and trading bloc, the European Union plays a critical role in shaping global standards, regulation, trade, technology, and industrial policy. The discussions highlighted both Europe's growing influence in an increasingly complex geopolitical environment and the significant opportunities emerging from a deeper and more strategic EU–Australia partnership.

Berlin

Tuesday 23 June

The delegation then flew to Berlin, where they concluded the day with a working dinner and briefing hosted at the **Ambassador's Residence** by **HE Ms Natasha Smith**, Australia's Ambassador to Germany, together with **Rod Commerford**, Austrade Trade and Investment Commissioner and Deputy Consul-General, Frankfurt. The briefing provided valuable insights into the political, economic, and strategic outlook for Europe's largest economy, and the growing importance of the Australia–Germany relationship within the broader context of deepening Australia–Europe engagement. Ambassador Smith highlighted the significant momentum in bilateral relations, including recent high-level ministerial engagement and growing cooperation across defence, critical minerals, energy transition, advanced manufacturing, research and innovation, and economic security.



02. Programme Summary

A key theme was Germany's ongoing strategic transformation as it responds to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, increasing geostrategic competition, and mounting challenges to industrial competitiveness. Discussions explored Germany's expanding defence ambitions, efforts to strengthen industrial resilience and reduce strategic dependencies, and the implications for Australia. Mr Commerford provided an Austrade perspective on emerging commercial opportunities in Germany and across Europe, highlighting growing demand for Australian capabilities in healthcare, agtech, defence and dual-use technologies, critical minerals, and the net-zero transition. The discussion reinforced the strong complementarities between the Australian and German economies and the increasing opportunities for deeper trade, investment, industrial collaboration, and technology partnerships. **The EABC gratefully acknowledges the support and hospitality of Ambassador Smith, and the entire Embassy team throughout the visit.**

Wednesday 24 June

The day began with a working breakfast with **Dr Volker Treier**, Chief Executive of Foreign Trade and Executive Board Member of the **German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK)**, Germany's largest business organisation. Dr Treier provided a useful industry perspective on Germany's economic outlook, industrial transformation, and opportunities to deepen Australia–Germany business cooperation. Discussions focused on the challenges facing German and European industry, including elevated energy costs, geopolitical fragmentation, Chinese competition, technological disruption, demographic pressures, and the growing urgency of strengthening competitiveness. Dr Treier argued that Germany and Europe are emerging from a period of complacency and must adapt more quickly to a more contested and uncertain global environment through trade diversification, innovation, industrial modernisation, and stronger economic resilience. Dr Treier welcomed the successful conclusion of negotiations on the EU–Australia FTA, emphasising that it should be viewed not as an endpoint, but as a platform for expanding cooperation across trade, investment, research and development, critical minerals, advanced technologies, and resilient supply chains. The discussion also highlighted the growing importance of trusted partnerships, strategic autonomy, and ensuring Europe is better positioned to commercialise and scale innovation in areas such as artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and critical technologies.

The delegation was then hosted at the **Federal Ministry of Defence** by **Dr Nils Schmid, Parliamentary State Secretary**, for a discussion on Germany's evolving defence and security priorities and the growing strategic importance of cooperation with Australia. The meeting provided valuable insights into how Germany's defence establishment increasingly views the Indo-Pacific and Europe as interconnected theatres, and Australia as a trusted strategic partner across defence, technology, economic security, and industrial resilience. The discussion took place against the backdrop of Germany's historic defence transformation and unprecedented investment in military capability, with Germany undertaking one of the largest defence build-ups in Europe since the Cold War and projected to spend more on defence by 2035 than the United Kingdom and France combined. Building on the momentum generated by the EU–Australia package, discussions focused on collaboration in quantum technologies, critical minerals, advanced manufacturing, defence innovation, space, and other dual-use technologies. Particular attention was given to critical minerals, resilient supply chains, research security, and technological sovereignty as foundations of future defence capability. Dr Schmid emphasised the importance of trusted partners working across the full value chain, from research and innovation through to industrial production, and fostering stronger links between Australian and German industry, SMEs, researchers, and defence innovators.

The delegation's next engagement was at the **Federal Foreign Office**, where they were honoured to be hosted by **Florian Hahn, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs**. The exchange provided a candid perspective on Germany's evolving foreign policy priorities and how Berlin is assessing a rapidly changing geopolitical environment. Minister Hahn highlighted the significant convergence of Australian and German interests across economic security, technological sovereignty, critical minerals, supply chain resilience, and support for Ukraine. He also emphasised that Germany increasingly views developments in Europe and the Indo-Pacific through a connected strategic lens, reinforcing the importance of deeper engagement with trusted partners such as Australia.





02. Programme Summary

Reflecting on the recent deepening of Australia–EU relations, Minister Hahn described the EU–Australia FTA, SDP, Australia’s Horizon Europe association, and the Critical Raw Materials Partnership as important foundations for a more ambitious and practical relationship. Discussions explored how these frameworks can be leveraged to accelerate collaboration across defence, industry, advanced technologies, research, and innovation, with strong support expressed for maintaining momentum towards implementation of the FTA. A particularly striking theme was the view that Europe’s challenge is no longer recognising strategic vulnerabilities, but acting with sufficient urgency to address them through diversification, resilience, and deeper cooperation with trusted partners.

The delegation was then hosted for the afternoon by EABC Major Partner **Siemens** at **Siemensstadt**. The visit began with a factory tour showcasing the production of the **Fuse Saver**, the world’s fastest outdoor vacuum circuit-breaker, originally invented in Queensland and now produced by Siemens in both Australia and Germany for global markets. This was followed by a visit to the **Digital Studio** which interactively showed the Siemensstadt square expansion, which is a massive €4.5 billion urban redevelopment project transforming the 76-hectare historic industrial site into a modern carbon-neutral smart city.

Delegates subsequently participated in a **Germany–Australia Business Forum** featuring **Asia-Pacific Committee of German Business (APA)** Board Member **Jan Rinnert** and members of the APA, including **Moritz Fink** and **Christian Madsen**. The forum brought together senior Australian and German business leaders to discuss how the EU–Australia package can be translated into commercial outcomes and long-term industrial partnerships. Discussions centred on critical minerals, industrial transformation, technology collaboration, defence supply chains, and investment, reflecting Germany’s growing interest in trusted partners capable of supporting economic resilience and strategic diversification. The exchange reinforced the significant opportunities for Australian and German businesses to work together across the full innovation and industrial value chain.

The day concluded with a spectacular dinner in the historic **Mosaic Hall** hosted by **Siemens AG** President and CEO **Dr Roland Busch**, and emceed by **Keith Ritchie**. The evening brought together senior leaders from government, industry, research, and technology, and featured a fireside discussion moderated by **Peter Halliday**, CEO of Siemens Australia and New Zealand and EABC Board Member. Speakers included **Dr Roland Busch**; **HE Ms Natasha Smith**, Australian Ambassador to Germany; **Florian Hauer**, State Secretary for the Government of Berlin; **Stefan Rouenhoff**, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy; and **Professor Bronwyn Fox AO**, Honorary President of the German–Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and UNSW Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise. Discussions focused on how Germany, Europe, and Australia are responding to rapid technological change, increasing geopolitical fragmentation, and growing pressures on industrial competitiveness. Topics ranged from artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and digital infrastructure to critical minerals, hydrogen, industrial decarbonisation, and strategic supply chains. A recurring theme was that trusted partnerships, technological capability, and industrial resilience are becoming increasingly important drivers of economic security and long-term prosperity. The evening concluded with remarks from EABC Deputy Chair **Professor the Hon Brendan O’Connor**, who highlighted the strong momentum behind the Australia–Germany and Australia–Europe relationship and the opportunity to translate that momentum into deeper industrial, innovation, and business cooperation.

The EABC gratefully acknowledges the support and hospitality of EABC Major Partner Siemens in hosting the delegation in Berlin.

Siemens exemplifies how Australia–Europe collaboration can connect research, industry, and commercialisation to deliver globally scalable innovation. More broadly, the Berlin programme highlighted the growing strategic alignment between Australia and Germany and the expanding opportunities for cooperation across industry, technology, critical minerals, innovation, and defence.



02. Programme Summary

Helsinki

Thursday 25 June

The delegation arrived in Helsinki for a series of engagements focused on strengthening Australia–Finland cooperation across strategic, economic, defence, and innovation priorities. As a highly innovative economy, NATO member, and increasingly important player in Europe's security, technology, and critical minerals landscape, Finland offered a distinctive perspective on many of the issues that had emerged throughout the Mission, including resilience, economic security, strategic competition, and technological sovereignty. The programme provided an opportunity to engage directly with senior Finnish leaders and institutions at a time of significant geopolitical change, as Finland continues to adapt to a transformed security environment while positioning itself as a key contributor to Europe's defence, innovation, and industrial future.

The programme commenced with a meeting hosted by **Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen** at the **Government Banquet Hall**. Drawing on Finland's unique perspective as a NATO member bordering Russia, Minister Valtonen shared insights into how Finland is responding to a more contested strategic environment and why resilience, preparedness, and economic security have long been central pillars of national policy. A recurring theme throughout the discussion was that security, trade, technology, and economic policy can no longer be viewed in isolation. Minister Valtonen observed that trade has increasingly become a domain of geopolitical competition, requiring countries to balance openness with resilience and reduce strategic vulnerabilities without abandoning the benefits of international engagement. The exchange also highlighted Finland's highly pragmatic approach to national security, shaped by the recognition that economic resilience, industrial capability, and technological strength are essential components of sovereignty. Minister Valtonen highlighted the opportunities created by the EU–Australia package to translate shared Finland–Australia interests into practical outcomes. The discussion reinforced the strong alignment between Australian and Finnish perspectives on economic and research security, innovation, defence, and the rules-based international order, while identifying significant opportunities to deepen cooperation across critical minerals value chains, advanced manufacturing, space, and emerging technologies.

This was followed by a meeting hosted by **Finnish Minister of Economic Affairs Sakari Puisto** at the **House of Estates**, which provided a valuable perspective on Finland's approach to economic security, innovation, and long-term competitiveness. A key theme throughout our meetings was that economic security underpins national security, with Finland adopting a highly integrated model that brings together government, industry, research institutions, and critical infrastructure operators to strengthen resilience and preparedness. Minister Puisto outlined how sustained investment in research and development and innovation has become a cornerstone of Finland's economic strategy. He highlighted Finland's ambition to increase national R&D investment to 4% of GDP by 2030, up from 3.2% of GDP, supported by strong private-sector participation and broad political consensus. The discussion examined Finland's focus on commercialising research, workforce adaptability, and developing competitive advantages in strategically important sectors including advanced communications, space, clean technologies, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence. The conversation explored opportunities for deeper Australia–Finland cooperation across critical minerals value chains, mining technology, advanced manufacturing, and dual-use innovation, and to leverage the EU–Australia package in support of stronger research, technology, and industrial partnerships.

The delegation then had the privilege of visiting the **Executive Experience Centre** at **Nokia Headquarters** in **Espoo**, where delegates saw firsthand how secure-by-design digital infrastructure is supporting economic resilience, national security, industrial competitiveness, and technological sovereignty. The visit provided a practical demonstration of many of the themes that emerged throughout the Mission, including artificial intelligence, critical infrastructure protection, advanced communications, data sovereignty, and the growing convergence of civilian and defence technologies.



02. Programme Summary

Delegates heard from the Nokia team, including **Jonne Soininen**, Head of Open Source and Technology Vision; **Leena Ollitervo**, Deputy Chief Geopolitical and Government Relations Officer; and **Ben Saint**, Head of Geopolitics and Government Relations, Oceania. Discussions explored how next-generation 5G and 6G networks, industrial digitalisation, private communications networks, and AI-enabled systems are reshaping industries and strengthening resilience across critical infrastructure, manufacturing, defence, logistics, and energy systems. A recurring theme was that communications infrastructure is increasingly a strategic asset rather than simply a commercial service. The discussion highlighted the growing importance of trusted technology providers, digital sovereignty, and resilient communications networks in supporting economic security and national capability. Nokia's evolution from "connecting people" to "connecting intelligence" reflected the broader shift towards data-driven and increasingly autonomous systems that will underpin future industrial and technological competitiveness. **The EABC sincerely thanks our Corporate Partner Nokia for hosting the delegation in Espoo.**

The day concluded with a briefing over dinner in the spectacular **Mirror Room of Hotel Kamp** with Australia's Ambassador to Finland, Sweden and Latvia, **HE Ms Frances Sagala**; Finland's Ambassador to Australia, **HE Mr Arto Haapea**; **Group Captain Sarah Stalker**, Defence Attaché to Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway; **Catherine Hill**, Austrade's Trade and Investment Commissioner for the Netherlands, Nordics and Baltics; **Kerstin Toivesdotter**, Austrade Investment Director; and **Dr Christian Fjäder**, Geostrategic Intelligence Group Managing Director and ANU National Security College Expert Associate. The discussion provided an opportunity to reflect on the day's engagements and the remarkable momentum in the Australia–Finland relationship. Ambassador Sagala noted that the delegation had arrived at a particularly significant moment in bilateral relations, marked by increasing ministerial engagement, expanding defence cooperation, growing collaboration in critical minerals and technology, and a broader convergence of strategic interests. Ambassador Haapea highlighted that Australia is one of only a small number of countries identified by Finland for deeper engagement outside Europe, reflecting the growing importance Finland attaches to the relationship. **The EABC sincerely thanks Ambassador Sagala and Ambassador Haapea and all Embassy staff and Austrade colleagues for their support during the visit.**

Over dinner, a number of distinctive features of Finland's strategic approach were explored, including its whole-of-society resilience model, strong culture of preparedness, and long-standing emphasis on self-reliance. Participants discussed how national security, economic security, energy security, and technological capability are increasingly viewed as interconnected challenges. One particularly notable observation was that Finland has traditionally viewed NATO as an additional layer of security rather than a substitute for national capability, reinforcing a policy culture built around resilience and readiness. Discussions also highlighted Finland's ambition to be a trusted partner for Australia in strategically important industries, including critical minerals, quantum technologies, satellites, advanced communications, and defence technology. The conversation explored growing opportunities for collaboration in these sectors, alongside expanding defence engagement, Horizon Europe partnerships, and research cooperation. Participants also reflected on Finland's sustained commitment to innovation and R&D, which continues to underpin its competitiveness and position as one of Europe's leading technology economies.

Friday 26 June

Having recently hosted **Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Ville Tavio** in Sydney, the delegation was delighted to be hosted by Minister Tavio for a working breakfast at the **Government Banquet Hall**. The discussion provided an opportunity to continue the dialogue on strengthening Australia–Finland economic ties and to hear directly from the Minister on Finland's trade, innovation, and economic security priorities. Minister Tavio highlighted Finland's recently released Indo-Pacific Strategy, in which Australia features as a key partner, and strongly welcomed the momentum generated by the EU–Australia package, emphasising the importance of moving quickly from agreement to implementation.





02. Programme Summary

Discussions focused on the growing intersection between trade, economic security, and strategic competition, with particular attention to secure supply chains, trusted investment, and the technologies that will underpin future competitiveness. Minister Tavio also outlined Finland's ambitions in areas including critical minerals processing, batteries, telecommunications, clean technologies, defence industries, and advanced manufacturing, noting the strong complementarity between Finnish and Australian capabilities. A particularly memorable observation was Finland's ambition to be Australia's partner in "all things critical", a reflection of the broad scope for deeper cooperation across strategic industries, innovation, and economic resilience.

The delegation then visited the **VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland**, where they were hosted by **Janica Ylikarjula**, Vice President, International Affairs and Policy; **Tauno Vähä-Heikkilä**, Director, Strategic Partnerships; and **Soile Kankaanpää**, Executive Vice President, Customer Operations. The engagement showcased the institutional foundations of Finland's innovation success, with VTT playing a central role in connecting government, industry, researchers, investors, and defence stakeholders to accelerate commercialisation and industrial capability. Discussions highlighted Finland's long-standing commitment to innovation as a driver of competitiveness, resilience, and economic security, underpinned by a cross-party commitment to increase R&D investment to 4% of GDP by 2030. VTT outlined its role in bridging the gap between research and market deployment, helping transform emerging technologies into scalable businesses and industrial outcomes. The roundtable also explored opportunities for deeper Australia–Finland collaboration through Horizon Europe, critical minerals, dual-use technologies, and research security. Delegates heard about Finland's leadership in quantum technologies, semiconductors, microelectronics, advanced communications, and defence innovation, including the **VTT-IQM superconducting quantum computer**, one of Europe's most advanced quantum computing platforms. A recurring theme was that Finland's competitive advantage lies not in any single technology, but in its ability to connect research, industry, capital, and government into a highly coordinated innovation ecosystem.

The delegation then participated in a **Finland–Australia Business Forum** and working lunch hosted by **Aaro Cantell**, Chair of the **Confederation of Finnish Industries** (EK - Finland's peak business and employer organisation) and Chair of **Normet Group**, together with **Dr Ulla Heinonen**, Executive Vice President, Green Growth. The session brought together senior Finnish industry and innovation leaders, including **Nora Steiner-Forsberg**, Executive Vice President, **Wärtsilä**; **Dr Erja Turunen**, Executive Vice President, Digital Technologies, **VTT Technical Research Centre**; **Jarmo Santala**, Strategic CFO, **Finnish Minerals Group** and Board Member, **Finnish Battery Chemicals**; **Henrik Klobut**, Investor Relations Manager, **IQM**; and **Professor Ilkka Niemelä**, President of **Aalto University**. Case studies highlighted Finland's strategy of focusing on a small number of globally competitive sectors where it can combine research excellence, industrial capability, and commercialisation. Presentations showcased Finland's ambitions to become a European leader in battery materials and critical minerals processing, quantum technologies, clean energy, and industrial decarbonisation, while demonstrating how long-term investment, policy consistency, and close collaboration between industry and research institutions have helped create globally recognised companies and innovation ecosystems. Discussions also highlighted the strong complementarity and the opportunities to combine Australian strengths in critical minerals, resources, and applied research with Finnish expertise in processing, advanced manufacturing, energy systems, telecommunications, and emerging technologies.

The delegation visited **Helsinki Shipyard** for a site visit and presentations from **Kim Salmi**, Managing Director of Helsinki Shipyard and CEO of Deep Future Engineering Oy; **Antti Leino**, Director of Public Affairs at Group Davie; and **Jussi Lehtinen**, Vice President of Sales & Marketing. The visit provided a firsthand look at one of Finland's most strategically important industrial assets and a sector in which Finland enjoys global leadership. Delegates heard how Helsinki Shipyard sits at the centre of Finland's world-leading Arctic maritime ecosystem, having delivered more than 500 vessels, including over 100 icebreakers, and accounting for approximately half of the world's icebreaker fleet.



02. Programme Summary

The discussion highlighted the growing strategic importance of maritime capability, Arctic operations, and specialised shipbuilding in an era of geopolitical competition, supply chain disruption, and renewed focus on sovereign industrial capacity. Particular attention was given to Helsinki Shipyard's role in supporting Canadian and US icebreaker programmes. The discussion illustrated how a sustained focus on niche industrial excellence can create capabilities that become strategically important to allies and partners around the world.

In the afternoon, the delegation met with **Mikko Hautala**, **Nokia's** Chief Geopolitical and Government Relations Officer and Chair of Nokia Defense, for one of the Mission's most in-depth discussions on technology, geopolitics, and economic security. Drawing on his experience across diplomacy, government relations, and the technology sector, Mr Hautala reflected on how communications infrastructure has evolved from a commercial service into a strategic asset underpinning artificial intelligence, industrial competitiveness, defence capability, and national resilience. A central theme was the emergence of the "AI super cycle" and the extent to which future competitiveness will depend on the digital infrastructure that supports it. He argued that artificial intelligence, data centres, telecommunications networks, energy systems, and national security are increasingly interconnected, with trusted networks becoming a prerequisite for economic sovereignty and technological leadership. The discussion also explored Europe's competitiveness challenges, including underinvestment in digital infrastructure, energy constraints, and growing dependence on external technology providers. He shared candid perspectives on the strategic implications of China's role in global telecommunications networks and supply chains, arguing that resilience and trust are increasingly displacing cost as the primary drivers of technology policy and procurement decisions. A particularly striking observation was that Europe cannot become an AI leader without the communications networks, data infrastructure, and affordable energy needed to support it. The discussion reinforced the shared interest of Australia and Europe in building secure, resilient, and trusted digital ecosystems.

The first week concluded with the traditional Friday evening delegation dinner. Delegates travelled by short ferry ride to the charming **Restaurant NJK** on **Valkosaari Island**, where they had the opportunity to reflect on an intensive week of engagements across **Brussels**, **Berlin**, and **Helsinki**, and to consider the implications of those discussions for Australia's future engagement with Europe ahead of the London programme.

It was reinforced throughout the week that Europe is undergoing a profound strategic, economic, and industrial transformation. Across governments, industry, and research institutions, there was a clear recognition that economic security, technological capability, industrial resilience, and national security are increasingly interconnected. More significantly, however, there was a strong sense that Europe is moving beyond diagnosing these challenges and is now actively reshaping policy, investment, industrial capability, and international partnerships in response. The pace of change, and the urgency with which governments and businesses are seeking to strengthen competitiveness, reduce strategic dependencies, and secure critical supply chains, was a consistent feature of discussions across Brussels, Berlin, and Helsinki.

For the delegation, this reinforced both the timeliness and importance of sustained Australian engagement with Europe. Throughout the Mission, EABC advocated for Australia as a trusted partner with complementary strengths across critical minerals, defence, advanced manufacturing, innovation, and research. The programme demonstrated that the recently concluded EU-Australia package has created a unique window of opportunity to deepen practical cooperation, with strong interest across Europe to translate political alignment into commercial partnerships, investment, research collaboration, and more resilient supply chains. The focus now shifts from establishing frameworks to ensuring Australian businesses, institutions, and governments are well positioned to seize the opportunities they create.



02. Programme Summary

London

Monday 29 June

The following week, the programme resumed in London, where delegates met with senior government, business, defence, investment, and research leaders to explore opportunities for the UK, Australia, and Europe to deepen cooperation across trade, security, innovation, investment, critical minerals, and economic resilience. Building on the momentum generated throughout Brussels, Berlin, and Helsinki, the London programme focused on the practical steps needed to translate growing strategic alignment into deeper commercial, research, industrial, and defence partnerships.

We began with a briefing at Stoke Lodge with senior officials from Australia's High Commission in the UK, including **Elisabeth Bowes PSM**, Deputy High Commissioner; Air Commodore **Matthew Harper**, Head of the Australian Defence Staff in London; **Marcus Lumb**, Minister-Counsellor (Political, Economic and Public Diplomacy); and **Stephanie Gorecki Natick**, Minister-Counsellor (Economic), Treasury. The discussion provided a comprehensive overview of the UK's political, economic, trade, and security environment at a time of significant transition. Delegates heard that, despite political uncertainty and the upcoming change in national leadership, there remains strong continuity across many of the policy areas most relevant to Australia, including defence, AUKUS, industrial policy, energy security, support for Ukraine, economic resilience, and engagement with both Europe and the Indo-Pacific. Officials also highlighted the increasing focus on regional economic growth and productivity, with many of the UK's emerging political leaders placing greater emphasis on economic development beyond London. A recurring theme was that the UK, Europe, and Australia are confronting many of the same challenges around economic security, defence industrial capacity, productivity, energy resilience, investment, and strategic competition. The briefing highlighted the strong early performance of the Australia-UK FTA, growing Australian investment in the UK, and the increasingly strategic nature of the bilateral relationship, driven by deeper cooperation across defence, critical technologies, and advanced industry. Particular attention was given to the progress being made under AUKUS Pillar II, especially in autonomous systems, advanced sensing, artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, and undersea technologies, with a growing emphasis on co-development, co-production, and accelerating capability delivery. Delegates also heard that the UK is increasingly seeking to rebuild and deepen practical cooperation with the EU across trade, security, defence, research, and industrial policy. While Brexit fundamentally altered the institutional relationship, officials noted a growing recognition in London that the UK's economic prosperity and security remain closely intertwined with those of its European partners.

The delegation then met with **CT Group's** Global Head of Research **Mark Domitrak**, Global Sector Lead, Defence **David Hogan-Hern**, and Associate Director **Alan Eager** for a wide-ranging discussion on the geopolitical, security, and policy challenges confronting governments across Europe and the Indo-Pacific. The session examined how policymakers are responding to an increasingly complex strategic environment shaped by Russia's war in Ukraine, shifting US priorities, China's growing influence, technological disruption, economic security concerns, and rising pressures on defence industrial capacity. Europe is increasingly seeking to reduce three strategic dependencies: on the US for security, the Middle East for energy, and China for manufacturing and industrial supply chains. Participants suggested that much of Europe's current policy agenda—from rearmament and industrial policy to energy diversification and supply-chain resilience—can be understood through this lens. Regarding threat perceptions, while Russia remains the dominant focus of European security planning, participants argued that policymakers are increasingly having to confront the reality of Russia and China, rather than viewing them as separate challenges. The conversation reinforced the growing importance of trusted partnerships, resilient supply chains, and closer cooperation between Europe and Indo-Pacific partners such as Australia. The discussion also examined lessons emerging from Ukraine, which was described as a global laboratory for defence innovation in areas such as drones, autonomous



02. Programme Summary

systems, resilient communications, and low-cost precision technologies. A recurring conclusion was that governments cannot compete across every emerging technology and will need to focus resources on a small number of strategically important capabilities where trusted partners can collaborate to achieve scale and competitive advantage. The session also highlighted the extent to which UK defence and security policy is being shaped by both external threats and domestic realities, including public concern around immigration, the central role of NATO, and the priorities set out in the recently released [UK Defence Investment Plan 2026](#).

Following this, the delegation travelled to **Australia House**, where we were honoured to welcome the **27th Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Julia Gillard AC**, in her capacity as Chair of the **Wellcome Trust**. The EABC is grateful to **Aneka Manners**, Executive Europe, and colleagues from EABC Major Partner **National Australia Bank** for co-hosting the lunch in the Downer Room. Drawing on her leadership of one of the world's largest philanthropic funders of health and medical research, Ms Gillard shared perspectives on the future of science, global health, artificial intelligence, and public policy. A central theme was the tension between extraordinary advances in science and technology and declining trust in many of the institutions that have historically enabled those advances. Discussions explored how governments, researchers, and industry can maintain public confidence while ensuring new technologies continue to deliver broad societal benefits. The conversation examined the critical role of sustained investment in research, innovation, and scientific capability, particularly at a time when a number of governments are reducing commitments to global health and development. Delegates also discussed the growing impact of artificial intelligence on health, medical research, and scientific discovery, alongside important questions relating to governance, ownership, and the distribution of benefits arising from major technological breakthroughs. Particular attention was given to trust in science, democratic institutions, and public policy, including studies showing that while trust in researchers remains relatively strong, trust in institutions is becoming increasingly fragile. The discussion also explored mental health, pandemic preparedness, climate and health, and the importance of maintaining evidence-based policymaking in an era increasingly shaped by misinformation, political polarisation, and rapid technological change.

The next series of meetings were held at the **Athenaeum Club**, beginning with **Emma Owens**, International Critical Minerals Lead at the **Department for Business and Trade**. The discussion provided an overview of the UK's recently updated [Vision 2035 Critical Minerals Strategy](#) and highlighted the extent to which critical minerals have moved from a niche industrial issue to a strategic priority sitting at the intersection of economic security, defence, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and industrial policy. Delegates heard how the UK is seeking to diversify supply chains, expand domestic capability, increase recycling, and reduce reliance on highly concentrated sources of supply. Particular attention was given to the Government's recently announced £50 million Critical Minerals Programme, including initiatives focused on rare earth magnet manufacturing, critical minerals processing, recycling, and demand aggregation. A key theme was that unlocking new supply chains will require more than project finance and government grants. Participants suggested that governments must increasingly focus on demand-side measures capable of creating long-term market certainty for investors, including offtake agreements, demand aggregation mechanisms, procurement policies, and requirements that a proportion of strategically important inputs be sourced from diversified or trusted supplier networks.

The delegation also met with **Sophia Brecknell**, Joint Head of the **FCDO-DESNZ International Energy Unit**, and colleagues to discuss the UK's approach to energy security, industrial competitiveness, and the clean energy transition. A central focus was the recently released Modern Industrial Strategy and Clean Energy Industries Sector Plan, which set out the Government's ambition to strengthen domestic industrial capability and position the UK as a global leader in clean energy. The UK is taking a targeted approach to industrial policy, focusing on areas of competitive advantage including offshore wind, carbon capture and storage, hydrogen, and advanced nuclear technologies. The discussion highlighted the importance of investment, planning reform, transmission infrastructure, and regulatory certainty in supporting the next phase of the energy transition. Emerging challenges associated



02. Programme Summary

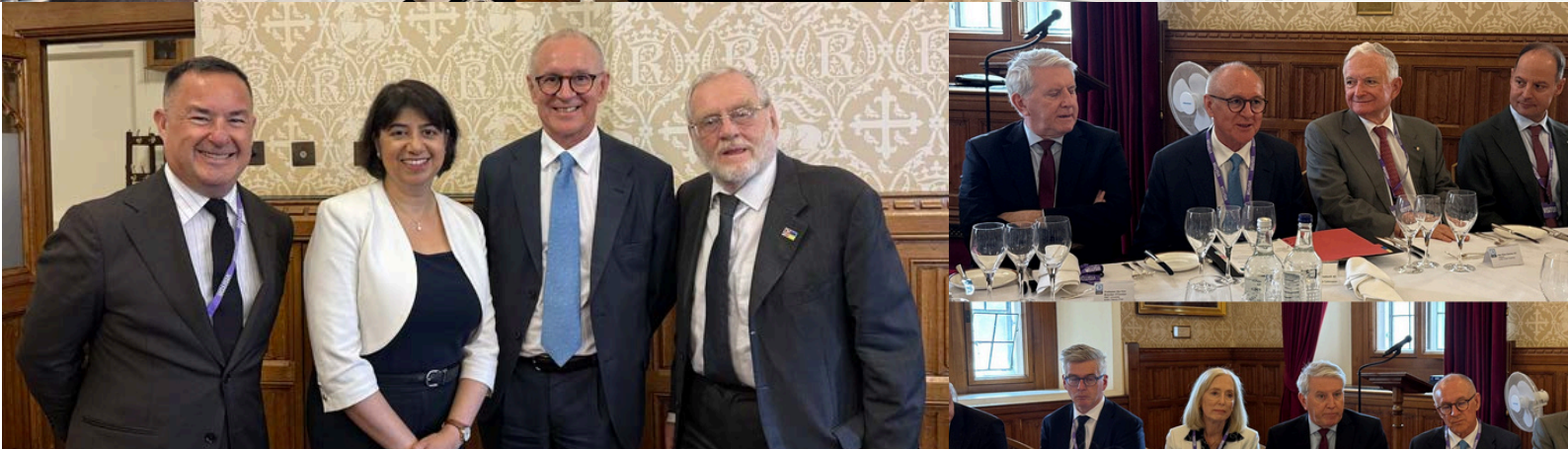
with artificial intelligence and data centres were also explored, highlighting the increasingly close relationship between energy systems, digital infrastructure, and international competitiveness. Opportunities for deeper Australia-UK cooperation were identified across critical minerals, hydrogen, nuclear technologies, clean energy investment, and industrial decarbonisation.

The delegation then met with **David Crowe**, Europe Correspondent for **The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age**, for a discussion on the political, economic, and strategic forces shaping the United Kingdom and Europe. Drawing on his experience covering both Australian and European politics, Mr Crowe provided a journalist's perspective on the challenges confronting the UK Government, the evolving political landscape, and the broader implications for economic policy and international engagement. A recurring theme was that many of the UK's current political pressures are symptoms of deeper structural challenges, including weak productivity growth, fiscal constraints, pressure on public services, and declining public confidence in political institutions. Discussions explored the changing political dynamics within the Labour Party, the growing influence of Reform UK, and the prospect of future leadership under Andy Burnham, whose emphasis on regional growth, devolution, and economic renewal is increasingly shaping national debate. Delegates also examined the relationship between economic performance and political stability, including the growing influence of debt, deficits, and bond markets on government decision-making. The discussion highlighted the extent to which many policy debates, from welfare and pension reform to infrastructure investment and public services, are ultimately constrained by the challenge of restoring and effectively articulating a vision for long-term economic growth. Mr Crowe also shared perspectives from the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC 2026) in Poland, highlighting both the scale of Ukraine's reconstruction task and the opportunities for trusted international partners to contribute to the country's long-term recovery.

We then travelled to **Old Westminster Library (the Cinnamon Club)** where the delegation was honoured to hear from **Professor Duncan Ivison**, President and Vice-Chancellor of **The University of Manchester**, for a discussion on the role of universities in addressing the UK's deeper economic and productivity challenges. Professor Ivison argued that weak growth, regional inequality, political fragmentation, and declining trust in institutions are closely interconnected, and that future prosperity will depend on the success of cities and regions beyond London. Drawing on Manchester's transformation over recent decades, Professor Ivison highlighted the importance of place-based collaboration between universities, government, industry, and investors in building successful innovation ecosystems. He described universities not simply as centres of teaching and research, but as institutions with a broader responsibility to contribute to economic growth, skills, productivity, and regional development. The discussion also explored Manchester's strengths in advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, cyber security, nuclear technologies, and defence-related research, including opportunities arising from AUKUS Pillar II and Horizon Europe. A recurring theme was that research excellence alone is insufficient: sustained growth requires parallel investment in industry, infrastructure, housing, transport, and skills.

Monday concluded with a business dinner convened by EABC Corporate Council Member **Philip Aiken AM**, where the delegation was joined by senior business, investment, infrastructure, and political leaders including **Sir David Higgins**, Chair of **United Utilities**; **Leo Quinn**, Executive Chair of **WH Smith**; **Isaac Levido OBE**, Founding Partner of **Fleetwood Strategy**; **Tristan Lovegrove**, Group Treasurer of **BHP**; and **Cyrus Kapadia**, CEO and Co-Head of European Investment Banking of **Lazard UK**. The discussion provided a frank assessment of the economic and political forces reshaping the UK. A recurring theme was that many of the country's political challenges are ultimately rooted in weak productivity growth, stagnant living standards, and a growing perception among voters that the system is no longer delivering improved outcomes. Participants argued that the rise of figures such as Andy Burnham and Nigel Farage reflects a broader demand for change, while noting that devolution, regional growth, and economic renewal are likely to remain central themes in UK politics regardless of future leadership changes. It was highlighted that citizens increasingly compare their experiences with government to the speed, convenience, and responsiveness of modern digital services, creating a





02. Programme Summary

growing gap between public expectations and government capability. Increasingly, businesses and investors are facing similar pressures, with social licence, trust, and geopolitical risk becoming as important as traditional commercial considerations.

On investment and capital markets, delegates heard that artificial intelligence is increasingly becoming an infrastructure story rather than simply a technology story, with major capital flows being directed towards data centres, electricity generation, transmission networks, semiconductors, and digital infrastructure. Defence technologies, autonomous systems, cybersecurity, critical minerals, and supply-chain resilience were also identified as priority areas for investment as national security and commercial priorities continue to converge. The discussion also highlighted Australia's superannuation system as a significant competitive advantage, providing a growing pool of patient capital that can be deployed into major infrastructure, energy, and industrial projects. Participants contrasted this with the UK's more conservative pension investment settings, noting the implications for long-term capital formation and economic growth. Reflections from business leaders also highlighted the importance of leadership, culture, and long-term discipline in driving successful organisations. Discussion of major infrastructure projects also reinforced the importance of clear objectives, timely decision-making, and stable governance arrangements, with participants observing that many delivery challenges stem from institutional and policy failures rather than technical constraints.

Tuesday 30 June

We began the day at the **Bank of England**, where we met with **Rohan Churm**, Executive Director for Monetary Policy, alongside **Josh Martin**, Economic Adviser, and **Zaar Khan**, Senior Economist. The discussion provided valuable insights into the UK's economic outlook, monetary policy framework, and the structural factors shaping long-term growth and productivity across advanced economies. Delegates heard how policymakers are increasingly operating in an environment characterised by greater uncertainty and more frequent external shocks. Drawing on the Bank's scenario-based forecasting approach, officials discussed the economic implications of recent geopolitical events, including volatility in energy markets arising from tensions in the Middle East, and the extent to which inflationary pressures continue to be shaped by developments beyond the control of domestic policymakers. A significant focus of the discussion was the challenge of lifting productivity growth, which officials identified as one of the most important determinants of long-term prosperity. Delegates explored the roles of capital investment, technological diffusion, workforce participation, migration, and demographic change, as well as the continuing debate around the economic impacts of Brexit. While the productivity outlook remains uncertain, artificial intelligence was identified as a potentially transformative opportunity, provided its adoption can occur at scale across the broader economy. The conversation also highlighted the growing interconnection between economic performance, financial stability, and geopolitics. Officials discussed the implications of rising sovereign debt levels, energy security, AI-driven investment, cyber resilience, and changing global trade patterns, reinforcing the extent to which economic competitiveness and national resilience are becoming increasingly intertwined.

The delegation then visited the **House of Lords**, where we met with **Seema Malhotra MP, Minister for the Indo-Pacific and Minister for Equalities**, for a discussion on the strategic and economic priorities underpinning the modern Australia-UK relationship. Minister Malhotra emphasised that Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security are increasingly interconnected through trade, technology, supply chains, energy security, and strategic competition. Against this backdrop, she highlighted the growing importance of cooperation across artificial intelligence, clean energy, defence, and investment, as well as the role of the Australia-UK FTA, CPTPP, and a range of recently concluded bilateral initiatives in translating strategic alignment into practical economic outcomes. Critical minerals featured prominently throughout the discussion, particularly the challenge of creating sufficient demand certainty to support new projects and diversify supply chains. Delegates explored the role of long-term offtake agreements, demand aggregation, and government procurement settings in supporting investment, while also examining opportunities to strengthen partnerships with trusted suppliers such as Australia. The discussion



02. Programme Summary

also explored the UK's efforts to build a more constructive and pragmatic relationship with Europe, particularly across defence, security, and economic cooperation. More broadly, the conversation reinforced the growing importance of resilience alongside growth, and the need for trusted partners to work together in responding to increasingly complex economic and geopolitical challenges.

This was followed by a valuable exchange with **The Rt Hon. the Lord (John) Spellar, UK Trade Envoy to Australia**, on opportunities to strengthen cooperation across defence industry, critical minerals, advanced manufacturing, investment, and strategic technologies. Lord Spellar highlighted the strong foundations provided by the Australia-UK FTA, noting that the focus must now be on removing barriers to implementation and expanding opportunities for businesses, investors, researchers, and industry partners. Discussions explored how the FTA, AUKUS, and growing cooperation in critical minerals, clean energy, and advanced technologies can support deeper economic integration and resilience across strategic sectors. A central theme was that future competitiveness will depend not only on access to resources and technology, but on the industrial capabilities further along the value chain. Discussions focused on processing, refining, advanced materials, and manufacturing capability, particularly in critical minerals supply chains where much of the future economic value and strategic advantage will be created. The practical foundations required to support AUKUS Pillars I and II and broader Australia-UK industrial cooperation were also highlighted, including workforce development, skills, training, industrial capacity, and greater mobility of specialised talent. Delegates explored how barriers such as qualification recognition, labour mobility, security clearances, and accreditation frameworks can impede collaboration and slow capability development. Opportunities for Australian companies in the UK market were also examined, including through the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor and the Manchester-Leeds innovation corridor, which are strengthening regional centres of research, advanced manufacturing, technology, and investment.

Finally, the delegation was pleased to be joined by **The Rt Hon. the Lord (William) Hague of Richmond**, Chancellor of the **University of Oxford**, President of the **Britain-Australia Society**, and Senior Vice President of the **Royal United Services Institute**. Lord Hague reflected on what he described as a new era in international affairs, characterised by growing geopolitical competition, rapid technological change, demographic pressures, climate challenges, and the absence of a stable global equilibrium. He argued that governments must focus on adaptation, resilience, and the continual renewal of national capabilities and institutions. A central theme was the growing importance of technology, innovation, and sovereign capability as determinants of national power. He highlighted the strategic significance of artificial intelligence, cyber security, advanced technologies, and AUKUS, arguing that technological leadership will increasingly shape economic competitiveness, assertiveness, and security outcomes. Reflecting on Ukraine, Lord Hague noted the extraordinary pace of innovation in drones, autonomous systems, and battlefield technologies, arguing that modern conflict is accelerating capability development and challenging long-held assumptions about defence procurement and military adaptation. He also highlighted the potentially profound consequences of disruptions to critical technologies and supply chains, particularly those underpinning the global digital economy. The discussion reinforced the role that capable and outward-looking middle powers such as Australia and the United Kingdom can play in shaping outcomes in an increasingly fragmented world, and the importance of investing in innovation, resilience, trusted partnerships, and sovereign capability to navigate the challenges ahead.

The London programme demonstrated that the UK is confronting many of the same challenges discussed throughout Europe, from economic security and defence industrial capacity to critical minerals, energy resilience, innovation, technological competition, fiscal pressures and social cohesion. At a time when the UK is deepening cooperation with Europe and trusted partners are reassessing how they build resilience, capability, and competitiveness, the Mission provided a timely opportunity to engage directly with the leaders shaping these debates. As Europe and the UK adapt to a rapidly changing strategic environment, Australia is well placed to be a partner of choice in delivering the economic, technological, and security outcomes that will define the next chapter of this relationship.



02. Programme Summary

Prato, 1 July 2026

Following the end of the EABC's Mission to Europe, a number of the delegation were delighted to participate in a series of high-level engagements hosted by EABC Deputy Chair **Vicki Thomson**, Group of Eight Chief Executive, **Professor Sharon Pickering**, Monash University Vice-Chancellor, and **Professor Cecilia Hewlett**, Monash Pro-Vice Chancellor (Europe) at the Monash University Prato Campus in Italy.

The afternoon began with a roundtable on '**Security, Openness and Geostrategic Opportunity in Australia-EU Research Collaboration through Horizon Europe**', bringing together leaders from government, universities, research institutions, industry, and the security community. While discussions examined opportunities under Horizon Europe and Europe's next research framework program (FP10), a central focus was how Australia can position itself as a trusted and strategically aligned partner within Europe's research and innovation ecosystem. Delegates heard that Australia is regarded as a highly capable, trusted, and values-aligned partner, with strong capabilities across research, critical minerals, advanced technologies, health, and defence-related innovation. However, participants stressed that trust must increasingly be demonstrated through robust approaches to research security, intellectual property protection, and the management of strategic risks. Strong research security frameworks were identified as both a strategic necessity and a competitive advantage for Australian institutions seeking to deepen engagement with Europe. The discussion also provided practical insights into how Australia can maximise future opportunities through Horizon Europe and FP10. Participants highlighted the importance of building long-term European partnerships, engaging early in research networks, aligning with European priorities, and demonstrating clear contributions to areas such as economic security, resilience, critical technologies, energy transition, health, and industrial competitiveness. Looking ahead to FP10, delegates heard that Europe is placing increasing emphasis on strategic autonomy, industrial capability, technology leadership, and the translation of research into economic and security outcomes. The discussion highlighted significant opportunities for Australia to position itself as a partner of choice in these areas, particularly where Australian capabilities complement European priorities. Participants included Australia's Ambassador to Italy **HE Ms Julianne Cowley**, EABC Deputy Chair **Professor the Hon Brendan O'Connor**, **Professor Kurt Deketelaere** of the League of European Research Universities (LERU), and **Anders Henriksen**, former Head of Counterintelligence at the Danish Intelligence and Security Service.

The EABC acknowledges the outstanding contribution of Deputy Chair **Vicki Thomson**, whose leadership continues to advance Australia's approach to research security and international research engagement. We also acknowledge and sincerely thank Deputy Chair **Professor the Hon Brendan O'Connor** for his co-leadership of the Mission and longstanding contribution to Australia through public service and government.

The day concluded with a **celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Monash University Prato Campus** in the gardens of the Monash Prato Centre, marking a quarter-century of educational, research, and institutional partnership between Australia and Europe. The evening highlighted the enduring ties between Australia and Europe and the important role the Prato Campus has played in strengthening those connections. The EABC also shares a special connection with the Centre through the late **Dr Carla Zampatti**, former EABC Deputy Chair and Patron of the Prato Centre, whose support helped restore the gardens in 2016.

We thank the **Monash University Prato team** led by **Professor Cecilia Hewlett**, all speakers and participants, and our colleagues from **the Group of Eight**, including **Tracey Wright**, **Dr Matthew Brown**, and **Paul Fede**, for an outstanding programme.

As Australia prepares to deepen its engagement with Horizon Europe and shape its approach to FP10, there is a significant opportunity to strengthen research, innovation, and commercial collaboration with Europe while reinforcing Australia's position as a trusted and strategically aligned partner.



03. Delegate Profiles



Professor the Hon Brendan O'Connor (EABC Deputy Chair)

Professor of Practice, Workforce Skills & Innovation, RMIT University. *Formerly Federal Minister in the Australian Government including Minister for Skills and Training (2022-2024; 2013), Cabinet Minister (2022-2024; 2012-2013), Minister for Employment (2013), Minister for Immigration and Citizenship (2013), Minister for Small Business (2012-2013), Minister for Homelessness (2012-2013), Minister for Housing (2012-2013), Minister Assisting for School Education (2011-2012), Minister for Human Services (2011-2012), Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information (2010-2011), Minister for Justice (2010-2011), Minister for Home Affairs (2009-2011), Minister for Employment Participation (2007-2009); former Chair, Australian Labor Party Government Service Delivery Caucus Committee; former Chair, Federal Parliament Australian Labor Party Industrial Relations Taskforce; Former Shadow Minister in the Australian Federal Opposition including Shadow Minister for Defence (2021-2022), Shadow Minister for Small and Family Business (2021-2019), Shadow Minister for Science (2021-19), Shadow Minister for Employment and Industry (2021-2019), Shadow Special Minister of State (2016), Shadow Cabinet Minister (2013-2022), Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations (2013-2019), Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Industrial Relations (2006-2007).*



Vicki Thomson (EABC Deputy Chair)

Chief Executive & Board Director, the Group of Eight Universities Australia; Founding Member, University Foreign Interference Taskforce (Australian Government); Director, Multiple Sclerosis Australia; Recipient of the Insignia of the Knights in the Ordre des Palmes Académiques. *Formerly Board Member, Australian Government's Australia-China Council; former Member, Australia's New Colombo Plan Reference Group (Australian Government); former Executive Director, Australian Technology Network of Universities; former Director, Communications, Universities Australia; former Chief of Staff to the Premier of South Australia (Government of South Australia); former Political Reporter, Australian Broadcasting Commission.*



His Excellency Mr Gabriele Visentin (EABC Honorary Board Member)

Ambassador of the European Union to Australia. *Formerly EU Special Envoy for the Indo-Pacific, European External Action Service; and Head of Cabinet, European Community for Steel and Coal.*



Philip Aiken AM (EABC Corporate Council Member)

Board Director, Fleetwood Strategy. *Formerly Chair, Aveva, Balfour Beatty, and Robert Walters; Board Director, Business at the OECD, National Grid, New Energy One, Newmont Corporation, and Essar Energy; Senior Adviser, Macquarie Group (Europe); and Group President Energy, BHP Billiton.*



David Bateman (EABC Corporate Member)

Head of Markets UK and Europe, NAB; and Advisory Council, Financial Markets Standards Board (FMSB).



Angus Barker (EABC Corporate Member)

Lead Independent Director and Deputy Chair, Vulcan Energy Resources; Chair, Australian Rare Earths; and Board Director, WAM Capital. *Formerly Chief of Staff to the Federal Minister for Financial Services, Digital Economy and Superannuation (Australian Government); and Managing Director, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Deutsche Bank, and UBS.*



Cameron Bettany (EABC Corporate Member)

Vice President, Group Governmental Sales, Volvo Group Australia. *Formerly Key Account Manager, Group Governmental Sales, Volvo Group; and Regional Sales Manager, Australia, New Zealand & Pacific Islands, Rosenbauer Group.*



Dr Matthew Brown (EABC Corporate Member)

Deputy Chief Executive, The Group of Eight Universities Australia. *Formerly Senior Director, Policy, Group of Eight Universities; Director, ATN Industry Doctoral Training Centre in Mathematics and Statistics (IDTC); and Senior Policy Analyst – Research, Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN).*



Neil Duncan (EABC Corporate Member)

Chief Risk Officer, London, NAB; and Board Trustee, Epping Forest Heritage Trust. *Formerly Risk Director Strategic Execution, Head of Regulatory Affairs Conduct, Head of Legal (London Branch), and Principal Counsel, NAB; Board Member, Medfin Finance; Solicitor, Dentons; and Associate Solicitor, Penningtons Manches.*

03. Delegate Profiles



Professor Bronwyn Fox AO (EABC Charter Member)

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Enterprise, University of New South Wales (UNSW); President, German-Australian Chamber of Commerce; Chair, National Robotics Strategy Advisory Committee (Australian Government); Member, National Quantum Advisory Committee (Australian Government); and Board Member, Museums Victoria. *Formerly Chief Scientist, CSIRO (Australian Government); Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), Swinburne University; Founding Director, Swinburn Manufacturing Futures Research Institute, and Deakin University's Carbon Nexus Facility; Chair, Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering (Victorian Division); Fellow, Engineers Australia, Royal Australian Chemical Institute; and Australia's Expert Adviser, International Scientific Report on Advanced AI Safety.*



David Gall (EABC Corporate Council)

Chief Executive Officer, National Reconstruction Fund Corporation (Australian Government). *Formerly Group Executive Corporate and Institutional Banking, Group Chief Risk Officer, Executive General Manager Banking and Wealth Solutions, Executive General Manager Banking and Wealth Solutions, National Australia Bank (NAB).*



Dr Jens Goennemann (EABC Charter Member)

Managing Director, Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre; Chair, German Australian Chamber of Industry and Commerce; Executive Council, Industry 4.0 Advanced Manufacturing Forum; and Board Member, Innovative Manufacturing CRC. *Formerly Managing Director, Airbus Group Australia Pacific, and Airbus Helicopters.*



Hon Nick Greiner AC (EABC Chair Emeritus)

Director, Gabane. *Formerly Premier and Treasurer of New South Wales (NSW Government); Australian Consul-General to New York (Australian Government); Federal President of the Liberal Party of Australia; Chair, Infrastructure NSW (NSW Government), Rothschild Australia Advisory Council, CPE Capital, CHAMP Private Equity; QBE Insurance; and President, Sydney Olympic Bid Company.*



Dr Paul Grimes PSM (EABC Board Member)

Chief Executive Officer, Austrade (Australian Government). *Formerly Secretary of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population, and Communities (Australian Government); Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (Australian Government); Chief Executive of the Department of Treasury (Australian Government); Secretary of the NSW Department of Treasury (NSW Government); Coordinator-General for Environment, Energy and Science (NSW Government); and Chair, NSW Net Zero Commission (NSW Government).*



Peter Halliday (EABC Board Member)

Chief Executive Officer, Siemens Australia & New Zealand; and Board Advisor, Australian Industry Group. *Formerly Head of Energy and Performance Services, Siemens Australia; and Senior Vice President, Siemens Schweiz, Siemens ASEAN, Siemens Singapore, and Siemens Taiwan.*



Professor Cecilia Hewlett (EABC Corporate Member)

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Europe), Monash University; Director, Monash University Prato Centre; and Board Chair, Monash University European Research Foundation. *Formerly Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Prato Centre and Global Network Development), and Associate Dean (International) of the Faculty of Arts, Monash University.*



Belinda Hutchinson AC (EABC Corporate Council Member)

Deputy Chair, Thales Australia; Non-Executive Director Qantas and Australian Philanthropic Services; Trustee, St Vincent's Curran Foundation. *Formerly Chancellor, University of Sydney; Chair, Future Generation Global Investment Company, QBE Insurance, and Thales Australia; President, Chief Executive Women; Non-Executive Director, AGL Energy, Crane Group, Coles Myer, Energy Australia, Snowy Hydro Trading, St Vincent's Health Australia, Sydney Water, TAB, and Telstra Corporation; Executive Director, and Macquarie Group*



Constantinos J Kittos (EABC Corporate Member)

Executive Chairman, Asuria Australia. *Formerly Chair, PeoplePlus Australia; Non-Executive Director, Snap Network Surveillance, and National Employment Services Australia; Mentor, Innovyz START; CEO and Managing Director, Angus Knight Group; and Executive General Manager, Computer Power Group.*



Andrew Low (EABC Board Member)

Executive Chair, Australian British Chamber of Commerce, Cobden Reid, Genea Biomedx Advance, and CML Entertainment Finance; Director of the Trust, Bell Shakespeare Company; and Writer, Prospect Magazine. *Formerly Director, Hunter Ferdinand Healthcare; Global Head of Investment Banking, CLSA; Chair, CLSA Australia, and PRP Group; Head of Asia, Macquarie Capital; COO and Chair of the Global Operating Committee, Macquarie Capital Advisors; Co-Head, Global Financial Institutions Group, Macquarie Group; and Member, Australian Government's Takeovers Panel, and Australian Government's Finance & Technology Centre Advisory Group.*

03. Delegate Profiles



Sid Marris (EABC Charter Member)

Deputy Chief Executive Officer & Company Secretary, Minerals Council of Australia; and Board Director, Mining and Automotive Skills Alliance (Australian Government). *Formerly Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister of Australia (Australian Government); and Canberra Bureau Chief, The Australian Newspaper.*



Andrew McCallum (EABC Board Member)

Global Manager, Trade and Market Access, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA). *Formerly General Manager Solutions Marketing & Research, and Marketing Services Manager (North Asia, Middle East, Americas & Europe), MLA.*



Professor Dane McCamey (EABC Charter Member)

Pro Vice Chancellor (Research), Professor of Physics, University of New South Wales (UNSW); and Chair, Research Working and Delivery Group, Security & Defence PLuS. *Formerly Deputy Dean Research and Enterprise, and Associate Dean (International Engagement), UNSW; Deputy Director, Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence in Exciton Science (Australian Government).*



John McMurtrie AM (EABC Corporate Council Member)

Chair, Rise Early Learning; and Patron, SCG X1; *former CEO, Link Group, and UBS Australia; and Chair, Lumination, Sydney Water (NSW Government), National Electricity Code (Australian Government), and Housing Loans Insurance Corporation (Australian Government).*



Andres Reith (EABC Corporate Member)

Partner, Head of European Business, and National Leader Real Estate & Construction, BDO Australia; Member Global Steering Committee - Real Estate & Construction, BDO Global; Committee Member, Sydney Anglican Property; Board Director, Kambala; and Member, ATO Property & Construction Stakeholder Forum (Australian Government).



Keith Ritchie (EABC Corporate Member)

Head of Communication, Marketing and Government Affairs, Siemens Australia and Pacific. *Formerly National Communications Manager, Boeing; Head of Corporate Affairs, GE and GE Finance; Director of Marketing, Aviva; and Senior Associate, Mercer.*



Professor Mike Ryan (EABC Corporate Member)

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), The University of Sydney; and Board Member, Mito Foundation. *Formerly Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research), and Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) and Senior Vice President, Monash University.*



Ben Saint (EABC Corporate Member)

Head of Geopolitics and Government Relations, Oceania, Nokia. *Formerly Adviser to the Minister for Communications (Australian Government); Senior Adviser to the Minister for Small and Family Business (South Australian Government); Policy Manager for the Lord Mayor of Sydney and Chief of Staff to the Lord Mayor of Adelaide.*



John Weber (EABC Board Member)

Chair, Frequentis Australasia, Kord Group, and Paypa Plane; Board Director, Australian Maritime Systems Group, and DIMEO. *Formerly Chair, Airservices Australia (Australian Government), Board Director, Western Sydney Airport Corporation (Australian Government); and Managing Partner, DLA Piper Australia, and Minter Ellison.*



David Whiteley (EABC Board Member)

Global Head of External Relations, IFM Investors; President, Australian Council of Superannuation Investors; Advisory Board Member (Department of Management and Marketing), The University of Melbourne; and Governor, AmCham Victoria. *Formerly founding Chief Executive, Industry Super Australia; and Board Director, HESTA, AustralianSuper, and Superannuation Trust of Australia.*



Tracey Wright (EABC Corporate Member)

Chief Operating Officer & Company Secretary, The Group of Eight Universities Australia. *Formerly Executive Manager, The Group of Eight Universities; and Manager across various portfolios, The University of Adelaide, Australian Technology Network, and South East Australia Gas.*

03. Delegate Profiles

Secretariat



Jason Collins (Chief Executive Officer)

Chief Executive Officer, EABC; Chair, European Business Organisations; Honorary Consul of Belgium in Sydney; Non-Executive Director and Chair of the Governance, Nomination, and Remuneration Committee, Business Events Sydney; Chair, Australia Youth Trust; Member of the Export Advisory Council, Screen Producers Australia; Member of the Advisory Board, UTS Business School; Honorary Board Member, Swedish Australian Chamber of Commerce.

Mob: +61 458 286 686

Email: jcollins@eabc.com.au



Jo Johns

Chief Operating Officer & Company Secretary, EABC; Founding Director, Australia European Leadership Dialogue (AELD).

Mob: +61 411 085 962

Email: jjohns@eabc.com.au



Caragh Heugh Johnson

Director, Policy & Institutional Affairs, EABC.

Mob: +61 425 814 458

Email: cjohnson@eabc.com.au



Sarah Kostoglou

Communications and Projects Officer, EABC.

Mob: +61 436 480 001

Email: skostogloueabc.com.au



Paul Fede

Digital Content Producer, The Group of Eight

04. Delegate Organisations



The Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre (AMGC) is an independent, industry-led, not-for-profit organisation established in 2015 to strengthen and transform Australian manufacturing. It works with government and industry to drive innovation and competitiveness by co-investing in projects that help manufacturers commercialise new technologies and turn ideas into market-ready products, supporting the growth of globally competitive Australian businesses. For more information, see [AMGC](#).



The Australia British Chamber of Commerce is a bilateral business organisation that promotes trade and investment between Australia and the United Kingdom. It connects businesses and policymakers across both countries, supports commercial relationships, and advocates on policy and market access issues to strengthen Australia–UK economic ties. For more information, see [ABCC](#).



Asuria is an Australian employment services provider that supports jobseekers into sustainable work through training, mentoring, and job placement services. It works with governments, employers, and communities to deliver workforce development programs, with a focus on helping people facing barriers to employment, including long-term unemployed individuals and other disadvantaged groups. For more information, see [Asuria](#).



Austrade is a statutory agency of the Australian Government. The Australian Trade and Investment Commission – Austrade – is to help deliver quality trade and investment services to businesses and policy advice to government to grow Australia's prosperity. Their innovative, client-focused services and programs support their clients to accelerate economic activity and commercial outcomes, and are in line with government priorities. Their services for exporters, the visitor economy, education institutions and investors include generating market information and insights, developing tourism policy, promoting Australian capabilities, making connections through an extensive global network of contacts, and working collaboratively with partner organisations. Austrade also helps Australian citizens overseas by providing consular and passport services in designated locations. For more information, see [Austrade](#).



Australian Rare Earths (AR3) is a South Australian ASX-listed exploration company working to secure a sustainable future through an environmentally and socially responsible approach to producing critical rare earth materials for a cleaner energy future. For more information, see [AR3](#).



BDO is a trusted adviser to clients seeking Audit, Tax and Advisory services. As one of the world's leading audit and accounting organisations, we have clients of all types and sizes, from large corporate organisations to private businesses, government and public sector organisations, entrepreneurs and individuals across an array of industry sectors. From a global beginning in 1963 with five original member firms in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, the USA and Canada. The name BDO stands for Binder Dijker Otte. Today, BDO extends across 166 countries and territories with its global head office in Brussels, Belgium. For more information, see [BDO](#).



The European Union is represented in Australia by a Delegation in Canberra, established in 1981 and is responsible for the conduct of official European relations with Australia. The Delegation works closely with all the diplomatic missions of the EU Member states represented in Australia. For more information, see [Delegation of the EU to Australia](#).



The European Australian Business Council (EABC) is a peak business organisation whose mission is to promote trade, investment, and institutional cooperation between Australia and Europe as a whole. The EABC plays a key role in fostering dialogue between business, government, and institutional leaders from Australia and Europe (the European Union and its Member States, the United Kingdom, and other key partners such as Switzerland and Norway) on ways to enhance bilateral relations. For more information, see [EABC](#).



Frequentis is a high-tech, safety-critical information and communications technology group, specialising in fields such as air traffic management and public transport. A sector leader, Frequentis claims a 75-year long history of close cooperation with public and private entities, from national railways to defence networks. For more information, see [Frequentis](#).



Fleetwood Strategy is a political consultancy and communications advisory firm that integrates communications, public affairs, and opinion research to help organisations strengthen their licence to operate. It applies campaign-style strategies from political and electoral communications to help clients navigate complex political and media environments, while aligning reputation management, stakeholder engagement, and strategic messaging across organisations and sectors. For more information, see [Fleetwood Strategy](#).



The Group of Eight (Go8) comprises Australia's leading research-intensive universities, focused on, and is a leader in, influencing the development and delivery of long-term sustainable national higher education and research policy, and in developing elite international alliances and research partnerships. For more information, see [Go8](#).



IFM Investors is a global investment management firm, managing funds on behalf of investors globally. IFM specialises in infrastructure, debt investments, listed equities, and private equity, with a focus on delivering sustainable, long-term returns for their clients. Their expertise spans across numerous sectors including transport, energy, and social infrastructure. For more information, see [IFM Investors](#).



Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) aims to foster the long-term prosperity of the Australian red meat and livestock industry. MLA is a service provider to the red meat industry and is the declared industry marketing body and research body of the Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997. For more information, see [MLA](#).

04. Delegate Organisations



Monash University is a leading Australian research institution with a global reputation for excellence in education and innovation. It offers a wide range of programs across multiple campuses in Australia and internationally. Monash is committed to addressing global challenges through research, collaboration, and impact. For more information, see [Monash University](#).



The Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) is the premier industry association acting on behalf of companies that generate most of Australia's mining output. The MCA represents a multi-billion dollar industry and is a leading advocate for enhancing sustainability, profitability and competitiveness. For more information, see [MCA](#).



National Australia Bank (NAB) is one of Australia's leading financial institutions, providing a comprehensive range of banking and financial services to individuals, businesses, and institutions. For more information, see [NAB](#).



The National Reconstruction Fund Corporation is an Australian government corporation established to support long-term economic transformation by investing in priority industries that strengthen national capability and resilience. It provides financing, including loans, guarantees, and equity investments, to help expand and modernise sectors such as advanced manufacturing, clean energy, critical technologies, and value-added resources. By partnering with private investors and industry, the Corporation aims to drive innovation, increase productivity, and support the development of a more diversified and sustainable Australian economy. For more information, see [NRFC](#).



Nokia is a Finnish multinational corporation and a global leader in telecommunications infrastructure, software, and technology, famously pivoting from a consumer phone giant to a networking powerhouse. Nokia operates in the areas of network infrastructure and advanced technologies. The company offers a comprehensive portfolio of solutions and provides robust network management, advanced analytics, communication services, digital and technical support, network security, and application services. For more information, see [Nokia](#).



RMIT is a global university of technology, design and enterprise. RMIT is a world leader in Architecture; Art and Design; Business and Management; Communication and Media Studies; and Engineering. RMIT University is a large, multi-campus institution rather than a single site. It features three main campuses in Melbourne along with international campuses in Vietnam and a research center in Spain. For more information, see [RMIT](#).



Rise Early Learning provide high quality early childhood services centred around catering to children's individual needs and nurturing creativity. With an emphasis on community connections and time spent outdoors, they are an industry leader in early learning experiences. For more information, see [Rise Early Learning](#).



Siemens is a German multinational technology conglomerate whose operations encompass automation and digitalisation in manufacturing industries. Siemens creates technology that empowers customers to positively transform the industries which form the backbone of our economies: infrastructure, transport, and healthcare. For more information, see [Siemens](#).



Thales Group is a French multinational company that designs, develops, and manufactures electrical systems, devices, and equipment for the aerospace, defence, transportation, and security sectors. Thales Australia is a trusted partner of the Australian Defence Force, leading the way in research, development, and system manufacturing. For more information, see [Thales](#).



The University of New South Wales is a leading public research university based in Sydney, Australia, and a member of the Group of Eight, a coalition of Australia's top research-intensive universities. It is known for its strong focus on research, innovation, and industry engagement across fields including engineering, science, law, business, medicine, and the arts. UNSW plays a significant role in producing high-impact research and developing skilled graduates who contribute to academia, industry, government, and global innovation networks. For more information, see [UNSW](#).



The University of Sydney is a prestigious institution known for its academic excellence, research innovation, and global impact. The University is a global leader in higher education, shaping future leaders, driving innovation, and making a positive impact on society. For more information, see [The University of Sydney](#).



Volvo is a Swedish multinational company known for its strong emphasis on safety, quality, and Scandinavian design across its vehicles and industrial products. Founded in 1927, it has built a global reputation for innovation, particularly in automotive safety technologies and sustainable mobility solutions. Today, Volvo is also focusing heavily on electrification and aims to become a fully electric car brand in the coming years. For more information, see [Volvo](#).



Vulcan Energy Resources is an Australian company producing lithium with net zero carbon emissions for electric vehicle and renewable energy supply chains. It operates the Zero Carbon Lithium Project in Germany's Upper Rhine Valley, combining geothermal energy and lithium extraction. Vulcan supports Europe's energy transition by decarbonising critical sectors through sustainable production. For more information, see [Vulcan Energy Resources](#).

05. Mission Supporting Partners

The EABC gratefully acknowledges the sponsorship and hosting of the delegation during the 2026 Business Mission to Europe by our Major and Corporate Partners:





European Australian Business Council
Level 3, 181 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000