

MEDIA RELEASE



**THE HON KELLY O'DWYER MP
MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS
ASSISTANT TREASURER**

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APEC Issues Paper highlights the trade benefits of data flows

- APEC Issues Paper highlights the trade benefits of data flows for SMEs
- Standards and regulatory coherence are key to building business connectivity
- Australia to host APEC SME Workshop in November 2015 in Sydney

An APEC data flows [Issues Paper](#) released today highlights the opportunities for increasing trade and opening up new markets for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The paper entitled [APEC Harmonisation of Standards for Data and Information Flows](#) was prepared by Standards Australia under the guidance of the Australian Treasury.

The Hon Kelly O'Dwyer MP, Minister for Small Business and Assistant Treasurer, said the APEC Issues Paper sets out the benefits business can gain from fully integrating into the digital economy. The paper marks an important Australian contribution to APEC's Digital Economy Action Plan and Connectivity Agenda.

"The movement of data is the life blood of any business and underpins international trade in goods and services," said Minister O'Dwyer. "The growth of the internet and emerging technologies such as cloud computing are enabling countless new small and medium businesses to engage with new markets more easily and cost effectively."

The Issues Paper indicates that the free movement of data will support activities in a number of business sectors including health, engineering, education and training, architecture, accountancy, management consulting, market research, fast-moving consumer products and others.

While the benefits of efficient data movement are considered critical to the economic growth of the region, there remain a number of challenges.

Dr Bronwyn Evans, Chief Executive Officer of Standards Australia, said that there were still standards related and regulatory obstacles to the free movement of data across borders.

"Alignment and coherence of standards and regulations will help APEC economies better realise the trade benefits of efficient data movement," said Dr Evans. "The efficient movement of data across the region will enhance prosperity."

The Issues Paper can be found at Standards Australia's [website](#) and will become available at the APEC website in due course.

The APEC Issues Paper is part of a wider project led by Australia for the harmonisation of data flow standards (APEC HOST). APEC economies have been invited to nominate speakers and participants to attend an APEC HOST Workshop in Sydney on 4 and 5 November 2015. The workshop will provide an opportunity for stakeholders from all APEC member economies to discuss findings from the issues paper and contribute to developing recommendations that will see SMEs remain globally competitive in the digital age.

This Issues Paper is also part of Australia's broader international engagement on SME issues. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that Australian businesses, particularly small businesses, fully capitalise on international opportunities through free trade agreements.

Australia's employment and national income crucially depend on increased trade and investment. This is why the Government's achievement in negotiating free trade agreements with our three biggest export markets – Korea, Japan and China – is so important. These free trade agreements provide opportunities for Australian businesses, including SMEs, to benefit from better access to global markets.

The project is funded through the Australian Government's APEC Economic Diplomacy Fund, managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

About Standards Australia

Founded in 1922, Standards Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, recognised by the Commonwealth Government as the peak non-government Standards development body in Australia. It is charged by the Commonwealth Government to meet Australia's need for contemporary, internationally-aligned Standards and related services. The work of Standards Australia enhances the nation's economic efficiency, international competitiveness and contributes to community demand for a safe and sustainable environment. For more information, visit: <http://www.standards.org.au>

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