

3 February 2022

The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP  
Secretary of State for International Trade and  
President of the Board of Trade  
Department for International Trade  
Old Admiralty Building, Admiralty Place  
London SW1A 2DY

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and  
Development Affairs and Minister for Women and  
Equalities  
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office  
King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH

Senator the Hon Marise Payne  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

The Hon Dan Tehan MP  
Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to you in our roles as the Chairs of the Group of Eight (Go8) and the Russell Group, the leading bodies for the research-intensive universities in Australia and the UK respectively. Both the Go8 and the Russell Group are key contributors to the high-quality research that is fundamental to countries seeking to remain competitive as we move into a post-pandemic future.

Research is a foundation of economic and industry success in an increasingly technologically driven 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is also critical to helping us understand and navigate the complex dynamics of more diverse, multicultural and heterogenous societies. This will be crucial to help maintain social cohesion as we move into an era of geopolitical change.

That is why it is more important than ever to deepen our existing partnerships with like-minded countries, and leverage opportunities such as the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and trilateral AUKUS partnership.

To this end, the Boards of the Go8 and the Russell Group met on 31 January 2022 to explore the opportunity presented by the UK-Australia FTA negotiations to successfully consolidate, extend, and leverage our existing collaborative connections.

The Go8 and Russell Group have pledged our commitment to work together to increase two-way research collaboration, including increasing commercialisation activity, and building on our status as trusted partners in areas of sensitive research. To further this ambition, our aim is to explore how this can be used to increase two-way trade and investment and strengthen our economies.

We also discussed mechanisms by which the above outcomes might be achieved, to the mutual benefit of both of our countries. These include:

- **A strategic alliance on research and innovation:** The UK and Australia would be well placed to create a strategic alliance on research and innovation. This could involve agreeing a shared research agenda with priority topics based on shared national priorities, and the creation of bilateral funding programmes. Universities in both our groups undertake world-leading research in the fields of AI, quantum, clean tech and health disciplines, for example, and we will explore how these can be leveraged to the advantage of both countries.

- **Student and researcher mobility:** Facilitating and fast-tracking researcher exchange between the two countries will strengthen our respective talent pipelines and reinforce our strong cultural ties. It also has obvious benefits in progressing the objectives and goals of the AUKUS alliance. We would be keen to explore reciprocal schemes for exchange and funding options to support young researchers e.g., through joint PhDs and early-career researcher sabbaticals. In particular, we would like to see opportunities to enhance the two-way flow of postdoctoral researchers as our experience suggests this can often lead to enhanced opportunities for engagement with industry.
- **Commercialisation:** Removing barriers and facilitating engagement between researchers and also potential industry partners across the two countries, specifically to support both governments in developing the proposed innovation dialogue to mutual benefit.
- **Cutting bureaucracy:** for example, through the development of shared IP and data sharing agreements, through joint opportunities to contribute to public procurement and how to minimise travel restrictions.

In line with these key opportunities linked to the FTA, we will establish a joint Go8-Russell Group committee to further develop these ideas. We expect this committee to have its first meeting in the next few weeks.

We would be pleased to meet with you, relevant members of your team or the High Commissioners of our two countries, to discuss how these outcomes might be progressed. In the meantime, for any questions you might have, please do not hesitate to contact the Chief Executives of our groups who would be pleased to arrange a mutually convenient time:

- Vicki Thomson, Chief Executive of the Go8, can be contacted through her Chief Operating Officer, Ms Tracey Hinchley, (e: [tracey.hinchley@go8.edu.au](mailto:tracey.hinchley@go8.edu.au); p: +61 2 5123 6701).
- Dr Tim Bradshaw, Chief Executive of the Russell Group, can be contacted through his Executive Personal Assistant, Ms Debbie Halpenny (e: [CEO.Office@russellgroup.ac.uk](mailto:CEO.Office@russellgroup.ac.uk); +44 020 3816 1300).

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Margaret Gardner AC**  
**Chair Group of Eight, Vice-Chancellor and President**  
**Monash University**



**Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell**  
**Chair Russell Group, Vice-Chancellor**  
**University of Manchester**