

Inquiry into Western Australia's Economic Relationship with The Republic Of India

The main objective of this report is to highlight and understand the current scenario and to make recommendations in order to facilitate a better economic relation between Western Australia and India. I would like to thank Mr. Yaz Mubarakai MLA for inviting me to add recommendations on this inquiry being carried out by the Economics and Industry Standing Committee. Based on my understanding and research, I would like to make the following recommendations.

1. Overcoming Linguistic Barriers

The national language of India is Hindi and the National language of Australia is English. It is of utmost importance to understand that in order to engage investors and businessmen in the western Australian market, this gap needs to be filled. Although English might be the second most spoken language and is a recognised official language by the Indian central government, a vast majority of investors and businessmen from India prefer engaging in business or investment with people of the same dialect. This is a popular trait that is found not only in India but also a lot of south Asian countries and China. The basic understanding of this trait is the instinctive bond factor Asian people form when they speak to someone in their own native language. The recommendation I would like to make over here is that the State Government should employ people who can speak both languages as well as local languages of the Indian States. These people will be the ambassadors for getting people to know about opportunities and spread knowledge and information regarding businesses, investments and trade. Employing people who have in depth understanding of economics and speak native languages of both the countries and sending them to India will definitely help in overcoming this barrier.

2. Facilitate faster Transport

The perception that Australia is a country far away from India still lingers in a lot of Indian minds. The only clear reason is the absence of direct flights. As of today, the quickest flight time from Mumbai to Perth is 12 hours with one stop. Having a direct flight would clear off this notion because any Indian wanting to invest or get involved in a business in Western Australia would have a clear indication that he/she may catch a direct flight and reach Perth on the same day. An added advantage of this is that it reduces the fatigue and jet lag one faces while travelling via a connecting flight, so they can start working the next day of arrival. The recommendation I would like to make over here is that working with Airlines who are in favour of this and getting direct flights started. Also, visa procedures should be made quicker for investors and businessmen. Family members of people applying for such visas should also get a priority. This entire setup would facilitate a smoother travel.

3. Understanding the current situation of sister state Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh is still in the process of developing major ports which provide a substantial amount of growth for the trade industry. The state government of western Australia should have a detailed on-field research carried out in Andhra Pradesh which will benefit the trade lobby of WA by having an insight to what is being done and what are the gaps that can be filled. Pitching the correct products and expertise to Andhra Pradesh will further open new avenues for trade and growth between western Australia and Andhra Pradesh.

4. Boosting Tourism

Australia and India are both cricket loving and playing nations. In order to attract more people to Western Australia, my recommendation would be to host a series of cricket matches between the two countries in Perth. The Perth stadium and WACA stadium can be really good venues to host these cricket matches. Besides the two National cricket teams of both countries, it would be a really good addition to attract other groups of the sport as well such the under 19 teams, state level teams as well as women's cricket teams of both countries. This will attract more people to Western Australia and boost tourism to a great extent.

5. Reports from State Government

The Tourism ministry of western Australia should carry out extensive research and surveys in order to gain data which indicates number of tourists in western Australia and the spending patterns. This data is of huge importance not only to the state government but also to the investors in India. Releasing statistics such as number of tourists, number of students coming in western Australia combined with data such as spending capacities, as well as sectors in which people coming in from outside are more likely to spend money on will put light on new business aspects and projects. Releasing these statistical data and information will attract businessmen and investors to start thinking of new ventures which will have a positive impact on the economic relationship between India and Western Australia.

6. Building Connections

In order to initiate the thought process of investing in Western Australia in the people of India, it is of utmost importance to highlight the key events which have happened in the past. Corporates and companies which have been operating in both countries share a good growth bond and this is a good area to begin with. In the past, countries such as United States of America, China and Canada have sent representatives to India. The main agenda of these representatives is to inform people about prospective business aspects and invite foreign investments into their country from India. The recommendation I would like to make over here is to increase the number of representatives from Western Australia in India and more specifically in Andhra Pradesh who would build connections with investors there. This will be of huge importance because these representatives will act as advocates and inform people about the sectors where trade can be initiated. State governments from countries listed above have had huge benefits by doing so. Target sectors such as international education and trade are the two main areas which have seen massive growth. This is a preferred combination namely Trade (or foreign investment) and International Education since investors and businessmen who invest and set up a business overseas are more likely to send their children or relatives to the same place for higher education. Highlighting the current scenario and showing people what are the prospective options for trade will be a step in the right direction.

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