

# **ALABC: Draft Strategy for Policy Advocacy**

## **Background**

ALABC's purpose is to help our members succeed in doing business in Latin America by providing:

- Important and relevant business information;
- Access to business and government contacts in Australia and Latin America;
- Opportunities to exchange information and ideas, and to learn from experts;
- Lobbying and representation to government in Australia and Latin America.

ALABC provides a unified voice in improving market access and reducing trade barriers, while ensuring its members have the right information and contacts to increase business opportunities.

**Policy advocacy to promote the best policies to advance trade, investment and business links between Australia and the countries of Latin America** therefore needs to be an important component of ALABC's work. Effective policy advocacy will ensure success in lobbying and representation to government (mainly Federal but at times State), primarily in Australia. ALABC has to concentrate its policy advocacy in Australia – it is not currently set up, nor does it have the relationships in place, to advocate with great effect in Latin America, so this should not be a current priority.

## **Objectives of ALABC's Policy Advocacy Strategy**

1. To be the voice of Australian business involved with Latin America in supporting policies designed to further trade and economic engagement with the region
2. To identify any areas where policy affecting business with Latin America needs modification or development and advocate relevant policy reform to appropriate governments (Federal and, where necessary, State)
3. To assist where feasible in implementation of policies promoting business with Latin America
4. As a result of successful policy advocacy to enhance ALABC's value proposition for its members and potential members and to strengthen ALABC's ties with relevant governments.

## **Implementing ALABC's Policy Advocacy Strategy**

ALABC's major advantage in policy advocacy is its capacity to represent the specific business concerns of its business members. ALABC needs to be the "go-to" business organisation for governments when they are developing policy and business initiatives for Latin America.

ALABC therefore needs to be an important source of practical information that can impact on policy development. ALABC has limited capacity to undertake its own research and analysis but it can and should actively canvas the views of its members to obtain the information essential to assist it in its policy advocacy role.

Recent examples of ALABC advocacy include ALABC's support for further Free Trade Agreements with Latin countries, such as Mexico, Peru and Colombia. In addition ALABC can play an important coordinating role in presenting the views of relevant Australian companies seeking a Double Tax Agreement with Peru. Significant advocacy is needed to have the Australian Government agree that this should now be a priority in improving the economic architecture for business operating with Peru.

A further key component in effective ALABC advocacy is **building a strong relationship** with relevant decision makers in government. The primary focus at the Federal level will be the **Minister for Trade**. Both the Minister's private office staff and his or her Departmental advisers from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Austrade are the key "gatekeepers" for the Minister, so major effort must be made by ALABC's CEO and Chair in identifying and engaging with these officials. Judicious invitations to the Minister to address major ALABC events and meetings where there are very important and specific issues to advocate are key in effective engagement and relationship building with the **Minister for Trade**.

ALABC also needs to engage as appropriate, using similar mechanisms, with other key Ministers at the Federal level, including the **Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and relevant Assistant Ministers**.

In the new Federal Parliament, ALABC has already developed excellent links with a champion for Latin America, **Trent Zimmerman MP**. These need to be nurtured and enhanced given the influential role Mr Zimmerman can play now with relevant Government Ministers, and the possibility that he may eventually become a Minister. Where time and resources permit, linkages with other MPs interested in Latin America would also be advantageous.

ALABC also needs to enhance its very close and productive links with the **Board of the Council on Australia Latin America Relations (COALAR)** given that it can be a strong advocacy ally.

**DFAT and Austrade are crucial allies for ALABC** and can be very valuable in assisting ALABC's advocacy role. ALABC should continue to regularly engage with the key officials in both agencies to further this objective.

Also at the Federal level ALABC should maintain good links with **the shadow Trade and Foreign Ministers** from the Opposition. Such linkages can be used to good effect (e.g. advocacy for the ratification of the Peru-Australia Free Trade Agreement.) Investment in good connections across the political divide can be important too if and when there is a change of government.

Both the **Queensland and Victorian State Governments** have developed strategies to advance links with Latin America and as a consequence they are vital

allies for ALABC. In addition there will be times where ALABC will be able to play an important advocacy role with these governments. ALABC can further enhance its very productive and influential position with both States by continuing to support them in their specific Latin American ventures, joining with them in hosting Latin America related events and providing advice and assistance when requested. ALABC's CEO and Chair and relevant ALABC Directors from those respective states continue to have the primary responsibility for relationship building and advocacy as required. ALABC should also monitor developments in other States and advocate for and support as appropriate any moves by governments in other states to build their links with Latin America.

ALABC should be open **to developing partnerships and alliances** to pursue relevant policy advocacy. These might be with other Business Councils or other Latin America oriented groups or associations who could offer support to ALABC. This could also involve Australian or Latin American corporations, or bodies such as Universities, who are not members of ALABC but share similar advocacy objectives. This might also be important in encouraging such entities to join ALABC.

Social media can be important in building support for policy advocacy. ALABC is significantly developing its competence in this important area. ALABC however should also be developing its links (as difficult as this can sometimes be) with **mainstream media**. The media can also be very important allies in policy advocacy, as well as in promoting the important work ALABC does in building trade and investment with Latin America.

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