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Minister for Small Business launches new tool to help business optimise free trade agreements and Asia growth opportunities

(Melbourne, 1 October) The Federal Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Small Business, **the Hon Kelly O'Dwyer MP**, encouraged more Australian businesses to tap into growth opportunities in Asia by making use of a new and innovative tool developed by Asialink Business, at a business forum in Melbourne today.

Minister O'Dwyer, herself an Asialink Leaders Program alumni, launched the **Asialink Business Country Starter Packs**, a comprehensive and highly accessible 'how-to' guide that empowers businesses of all sizes to get started or expand in Asia.

"The Coalition Government recognises that many Australian businesses are actively seeking help to overcome challenges they face to do business in Asia. I am confident that the Asialink Business Country Starter Packs will be a valuable tool for small businesses looking to engage with Asia," Ms O'Dwyer said.

"The Country Starter Packs for China, Indonesia, Korea and Thailand are the first in a suite of guides that give businesses the keys to unlock opportunities in the fastest growing markets in our region," **Asialink Business CEO Mukund Narayanamurti** said.

"They feature practical case studies, up-to-date market insights and first-hand examples to assist businesses in all sectors of the economy. The Packs provide a roadmap to navigate Asia's diverse commercial environments, and highlight opportunities in specific sectors, markets and economies," Narayanamurti said.

Developed with support from the Commonwealth Government, the Country Starter Packs are available in hard and soft copy formats and as a shareable app.

"Around Australia, businesses of all sizes told us they recognise the potential in Asia, and are optimistic about the doors opened by the China - Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) and other FTAs - but they want a practical tool to help translate these opportunities into reality," Narayanamurti said.

"China is the world's biggest dairy import market and a key target for the Australian dairy industry with the significant growth potential it provides. The China FTA is a platform to enable this growth and for Australian agriculture to take advantage of the consumer market opportunities it presents," **Devondale Murray Goulburn Managing Director, Gary Helou**, said speaking at the Country Starter Pack launch.

A 2014 survey by Asialink Business supported by the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Industry Group identified a lack of readily available, practical information on Asian markets as a key factor holding back many Australian businesses.

"The Country Starter Packs fill the critical information gap that business identified as their biggest hurdle," Narayanamurti said.

"The ChAFTA, which we hope to see ratified soon, has increased the urgency for Australian business to do its homework and get prepared. This agreement, combined with other FTAs and the growing appetite of Asia's middle classes, has created an unprecedented window for Australia to grow, create jobs and diversify its economy," Narayanamurti said.

"It is critical that business act purposefully to take up these opportunities and the Country Starter Packs are an essential first step in helping all Australian organisations be better prepared to engage with China and other Asian markets," Narayanamurti said.

The country starter packs are available at: <http://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/csp>. Asialink Business works to build an Asia capable Australian workforce. We support businesses in all sectors to develop the critical skills, knowledge and networks needed to better understand and engage with Asia.

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