

## Australia

Australia's level of activity is in accordance with the popular view that its future economic health depends on its relations with Asia. More than sixty percent of Australia's merchandise exports, valued at nearly A\$60 billion annually, are sold to Asian economies.

The Government recognizes the challenge of succeeding in Asia as primarily one for Australian business, but also that government has nonetheless an important facilitating role. Promoting Australia to the Asia Pacific area, as well as increasing Australian business preparedness and penetration, is clearly a top government priority.

A whole range of government initiatives and programs continue to be undertaken to link Australia more closely with the Asia Pacific area. In 1993, the Government introduced its A\$60 million package of initiatives (*Australia in Asia*) designed to boost integration of the Australian economy with Asia and to broaden Australia's image in the region. Taking into account programs already in existence, the eighteen separate initiatives focus on four main areas identified as needing increased efforts to take full advantage of existing opportunities:

- more business oriented information on and analysis of the Asian economies;
- more extensive business networks with Asia;
- more momentum to updating Australia's image in Asia; and
- improved knowledge and awareness of Asia in Australia.

An outline of the funding implications for each of the eighteen *Australia in Asia* initiatives is presented in Appendix 1.

*Australia in Asia* was introduced to compliment existing government programs. In 1991, Austrade had undergone a major reallocation of its resources to the Asia Pacific area that resulted in a substantially increased presence in Asia. Austrade is the agency chiefly responsible for collecting and disseminating information on trade, investment and tender opportunities to the Australian business community.

Austrade also administers several trade promotion programs that focus exclusively on Asian-Pacific markets, including a range of measures which seek to encourage a stronger export performance from Australian industry in Asian markets. The most substantial of which is the *Export Market Development Grants Scheme*. The program provides cash grants towards the cost of export promotion and development. In 1991-92, 2401 companies received assistance of A\$127.4 million with export sales achieved by these companies totalling A\$2.8 billion.

Austrade's *Asia Pacific Fellowships Program* continues to provide financial assistance to help companies place selected staff -at executive and graduate level- in an Asian market. Through the *Asian Business Circle*, Austrade is also taking steps to tap into the skills of Asian