

ASEAN-Australia Special Summit

Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) gathered in Melbourne from the 4th-6th March 2024 for the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations.

Prime Minister Albanese hosted the leaders of the Lao PDR, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Timor-Leste.

This brief outlines the key announcements from the summit. For an in-depth details on any announcement, please reach out to Hawker Britton's Managing Director, Simon Banks at sbanks@hawkerbritton.com

Commitments

The Australian Government pledged to deliver on key recommendations of [“Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040’](#). Key Commitments include:

- **\$2 billion for the Southeast Asia Investment Financing Facility** to provide loans, guarantees, equity and insurance for projects that would boost Australian trade and investment in Southeast Asia.
 - \$70.2 million investment to establish Deal Team hubs throughout the ASEAN region. These teams will comprise specialists from Austrade, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Export Finance Australia.
- \$140 million over four years to extend the **Partnerships for Infrastructure Program**. The Program will support efforts to improve regional infrastructure development.
- Appointing **10 Business Champions** to facilitate greater commercial links between Australia and the economies of ASEAN.
- The launch of **regional technology 'Landing Pads'** in Jakarta and Ho Chi Minh City to provide on-the-ground support for Australian businesses to boost technology services exports to Southeast Asian markets.
- **Improving visa access** for Southeast Asia. Business Visitor visas will be extended from three to five years. The ten-year Frequent Traveller stream will be extended to eligible ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste.

The Australian government has also committed to:



- Invest \$64 million over the next four years, including \$40 million in new funding, to enhance Australia's Southeast Asia Maritime Partnership.
- Support 38 community, university and business projects to strengthen collaboration between Australia and the ASEAN.
- Investing a further \$222.5 million to support the resilience and prosperity of the Mekong Region through the Mekong-Australia Partnership.
- Creating the "ASEAN-Australia Centre" to promote greater Southeast Asia cultural literacy in Australia.
- More than 75 new Aus4ASEAN scholarships.
- An energy cooperation package under the Aus4ASEAN Futures Initiative to enhance ASEAN-led regional energy policy and planning, including implementation of the ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutrality. The package will support the ASEAN Centre for Energy and the establishment of an ASEAN Centre for Climate Change in Brunei Darussalam.
- Providing English language training for Timor-Leste to support its path to full ASEAN membership. The package will enable valuable training to help Timor-Leste engage effectively in ASEAN.

The Summit concluded with the signing of the '[Melbourne Declaration](#)', which reaffirmed member states' commitment to securing peace, stability, prosperity, and a sustainable future for the region.

Vietnam

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

On the 7th of March, Vietnam and Australia signed a [comprehensive strategic partnership](#) (CSP)

The CSP will support expanded cooperation on climate, environment and energy, and digital transformation and innovation, building on established collaboration across defence and security, economic engagement and education.

Other announcements included:

- An MoU on Energy and Mineral Cooperation Has been signed between the two countries
- A new Peacekeeping Partnership Arrangement to solidify Australia's support for Vietnam's peacekeeping efforts, including the UN Mission in South Sudan
- New arrangements enabling 1,000 Vietnamese workers to work in the agricultural sector to fill labour gaps in rural and regional Australia and a new agreement between agencies responsible for trade and investment promotion.
- A renewed framework for cooperation between Australian and Vietnamese education institutions



Singapore

Singapore-Australia Green and Digital Shipping Corridor

On the 5th of March, both countries signed a MoU to establish a Green and Digital Shipping Corridor.

The Green and Digital Shipping Corridor seeks to enable the piloting of solutions to enhance the resilience, efficiency and sustainability of global supply chains and logistics through Singapore and Australia.

Areas to be actioned involve:

- exploring opportunities for a joint supply chain and logistics of zero or near-zero GHG emission fuels.
- developing training programs to safely handle zero or near-zero GHG emission fuels.
- supporting bunkering requirements and standards for vessels servicing the maritime route between the two countries.
- conducting test pilots and demonstration projects for bunkering zero or near-zero GHG emission fuels.
- collaborating in leveraging digital technologies to enable and enhance port call optimisation, and identifying opportunities for shared platforms, technologies or processes to streamline port calls.
- exchanging information to enable just-in-time arrivals, departures, and marine services.

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

In 2015, Australia and Singapore signed a [Comprehensive Strategic Partnership](#) (CSP), which encompasses all aspects of the relationship including trade, defence, science and innovation, education and the arts, digital economy and the green economy.

Both countries have committed to updating the Australia-Singapore CSP within the next year. Australian and Singaporean Leaders will review the updated CSP at the 2025 Annual Leaders Meeting in Singapore.

Grant Funding

The two Prime Ministers announced the first group of Australian and Singaporean small and medium-sized businesses to receive grants under the \$20 million Go-Green Co-Innovation Program, which will facilitate co-innovation between the two countries and support the development of sustainable products and services.



Additional grant funding was announced to encourage collaborative research between Australian and Singaporean scientists on sustainability, innovation and food technology.

The two nations also announced a new agreement between border agencies to increase cooperation on border security and help combat cross-border crime.

Laos

On the 6th of March, Laos and Australia signed the Australia-Laos Comprehensive Partnership. It will drive bilateral cooperation across four pillars:

- People, education and human resource development;
- Economics, trade and investment;
- Climate, environment and energy; and
- Defence and law enforcement.

Australia also committed \$3 million to assist in the elimination of dengue fever in Laos.

Malaysia

Key Announcements included:

- A new agreement to encourage collaboration between Australian and Malaysian technology companies, to will boost two-way investment.
- A new Maritime Cooperation Package to bolster bilateral maritime cooperation, strengthen maritime domain awareness capability, “and build expertise in international law of the sea and marine environmental protection