# Australian cranes boost UK HS2 efficiency under Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement



An Australian crane specialist’s involvement at a major UK infrastructure project highlights the tangible benefits emerging from the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement (A-UKFTA), which took effect on 31 May 2023. Now in its second year, the trade deal is proving to be a significant catalyst for bilateral business collaborations, exemplified by Marr Contracting’s role at the Old Oak Common HS2 construction site in west London.

Marr Contracting, a specialist crane company based in Australia, supplied three large tower cranes for the HS2 project, operated by the Balfour Beatty Vinci Systra Joint Venture (BBVSJV). The firm introduced a strategy using just three high-capacity luffing jib tower cranes—two with 330 tonne capacity and one with 96 tonnes—reducing site clutter and complexity. Simon Marr, managing director of Marr Contracting, explained that their cranes' greater lift capacity enabled the use of larger pre-assembled modules, diminishing the need for temporary works and splicing of steel trusses, which in turn enhanced productivity and safety. Atul Jewitt, BBVSJV delivery director, praised the deployment of Marr’s cranes as central to their construction approach, highlighting the collaboration with international partners as essential for meeting the demanding engineering challenges of one of the UK’s largest infrastructure undertakings.

The Australian High Commission marked the second anniversary of the trade agreement with a visit to the HS2 site. Andrew Sainsbury, economic counsellor at the Commission, noted that the agreement has expanded opportunities, with a notable rise in two-way trade and foreign direct investment reaching A$366 billion in 2024. Marr Contracting’s UK ventures extend beyond HS2 to projects including Hinkley Point C, Lostock sustainable energy plant, and North London Heat & Power, demonstrating an alternative, more efficient model for large infrastructure initiatives. Simon Marr also emphasised the reciprocal nature of the deal, which facilitates professional development and the exchange of skills and knowledge between the Australian and UK branches of the company.

The Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement broadly eliminates tariffs on over 99% of Australian goods exported to the UK, covering key products such as wine, rice, honey, and nuts, while also fostering greater market access for Australian service suppliers across professional, financial, and telecommunications sectors. It encourages digital trade by addressing restrictive practices, opening avenues for electronic contracts and cross-border data flow. The agreement further grants Australian firms the right to compete for UK government contracts, enhancing opportunities in sectors including infrastructure.

From the UK perspective, the deal similarly opens up access for British services and investors to Australia, removing tariffs on UK exports, simplifying business travel for professionals, and facilitating digital trade. UK businesses benefit from access to Australian government contracts worth around £10 billion annually, particularly in infrastructure sectors akin to rail and energy. The agreement’s mutual recognition of professional qualifications, including architects, engineers, and transport consultants, further supports seamless collaboration on projects of international scale.

As demonstrated by Marr Contracting’s success at Old Oak Common, the A-UKFTA is facilitating cross-border partnerships that introduce safer, more productive, and efficient approaches to major infrastructure projects. Both nations appear poised to deepen economic ties, leveraging the agreement to foster increased trade, investment, and knowledge exchange in key sectors critical to their future growth.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.constructionbriefing.com/news/trade-agreement-works-well-for-marr-contracting/8063141.article?zephr_sso_ott=Zj4NeV), [[4]](https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/aukfta/benefits)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.constructionbriefing.com/news/trade-agreement-works-well-for-marr-contracting/8063141.article?zephr_sso_ott=Zj4NeV)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.constructionbriefing.com/news/trade-agreement-works-well-for-marr-contracting/8063141.article?zephr_sso_ott=Zj4NeV)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/ukfta-outcomes-documents/benefits-australia), [[4]](https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/aukfta/benefits), [[5]](https://www.austrade.gov.au/en/how-we-can-help-you/australian-exporters/free-trade-agreements/united-kingdom.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-australia-fta-benefits-for-the-uk/uk-australia-free-trade-agreement-10-key-benefits-web-version), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-australia-fta-benefits-for-sectors-of-the-uk-economy/uk-australia-free-trade-agreement-benefits-for-the-uk-web-version), [[7]](https://www.pm.gov.au/media/historic-trade-deal-united-kingdom)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.constructionbriefing.com/news/trade-agreement-works-well-for-marr-contracting/8063141.article?zephr_sso_ott=Zj4NeV), [[2]](https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/ukfta-outcomes-documents/benefits-australia), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-australia-fta-benefits-for-the-uk/uk-australia-free-trade-agreement-10-key-benefits-web-version)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.constructionbriefing.com/news/trade-agreement-works-well-for-marr-contracting/8063141.article?zephr_sso_ott=Zj4NeV> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/ukfta-outcomes-documents/benefits-australia> - The Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement (A-UKFTA), effective from 31 May 2023, offers Australian businesses unprecedented access to the UK market. It removes tariffs on over 99% of Australian goods exports, including wine, rice, honey, and nuts. The agreement also facilitates digital trade by addressing restrictive practices and commits to accepting electronic contracts. Additionally, it provides Australian service suppliers and investors with greater access and certainty across various sectors, including professional services, financial services, and telecommunications. The A-UKFTA aims to strengthen the economic ties between Australia and the UK, fostering increased trade and investment opportunities.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-australia-fta-benefits-for-the-uk/uk-australia-free-trade-agreement-10-key-benefits-web-version> - The UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (A-UKFTA) delivers significant benefits to the UK economy. It grants unprecedented access for British services and investors to the Australian market, removes tariffs on all UK exports to Australia, and facilitates easier business travel for British professionals. The agreement also opens up new digital trade opportunities, lowers prices for British consumers, and reduces red tape for entrepreneurs and small businesses. UK companies gain access to Australian government contracts worth approximately £10 billion per year, and the deal strengthens cooperation on shared challenges, marking a major step for UK trade in the Indo-Pacific region.
4. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/aukfta/benefits> - The Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement (A-UKFTA) enhances the bilateral trade relationship by providing Australian exporters with duty-free access to the UK market for over 99% of goods. It eliminates tariffs on key exports such as wine, rice, and honey. The agreement also improves market access for services, including financial and professional services, and strengthens investment flows between the two nations. It addresses non-tariff barriers, making it easier for Australian companies to do business in the UK. The A-UKFTA aims to drive increased trade, economic growth, and job creation for both countries.
5. <https://www.austrade.gov.au/en/how-we-can-help-you/australian-exporters/free-trade-agreements/united-kingdom.html> - The Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement (A-UKFTA) removes tariffs on over 99% of Australian goods exported to the UK, including wine, rice, honey, and nuts. It also improves digital trade by establishing rules for the free flow of data and electronic contracts. The agreement increases market access for financial services and grants Australian businesses the right to bid for a wide range of UK government contracts. Additionally, it extends the working holiday arrangement to three years for individuals aged 18 to 35 and introduces new visa provisions for intra-corporate transfers and innovators from the UK.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-australia-fta-benefits-for-sectors-of-the-uk-economy/uk-australia-free-trade-agreement-benefits-for-the-uk-web-version> - The UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (A-UKFTA) offers substantial benefits to various sectors of the UK economy. It provides UK companies with legally guaranteed access to Australian government contracts worth approximately £10 billion per year, including in infrastructure projects like railway constructions and road upgrades. The agreement facilitates easier business travel for UK professionals, including architects, engineers, and transport consultants, and ensures the recognition of UK professional qualifications across all infrastructure sectors. It also removes tariffs on rail-related goods, such as rolling stock and track fixtures, enhancing the competitiveness of UK rail businesses in the Australian market.
7. <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/historic-trade-deal-united-kingdom> - The Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement (A-UKFTA), effective from 31 May 2023, eliminates tariffs on over 99% of Australian goods exports to the UK, including wine, rice, and honey. The agreement also removes tariffs on UK imports to Australia after five years, benefiting Australian consumers and businesses. It facilitates easier business travel for Australian professionals and extends the working holiday arrangement to three years for individuals aged 18 to 35. The A-UKFTA aims to strengthen economic ties between Australia and the UK, fostering increased trade and investment opportunities.