
A reply to John Lodewijks' review of *The Airport Economist*,
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Since its launch in 2008, *The Airport Economist* has become an 'export' in its own right (and an accidental export at that!). *The Airport Economist* has received some favourable reviews and comments from Tim Harford (author of *The Undercover Economist*), The Thai Prime Minister Abhisit, Reserve Bank Governor Glenn Stevens, former ACTU Secretary Bill Kely and most recently from Nobel Laureate Joe Stiglitz. It has also received praise from many people in the community who said they 'never before found economics or trade interesting' and from exporters who just wanted 'something easy to read but that tells a good story' on their various plane flights to markets beyond our shores.

The Airport Economist has received two less favourable reviews. One was from a travel writer who said 'there was too much economics in it' (a bit like saying Steve Waugh's tour diaries have 'too much cricket' in them). The other was from John Lodewijks in this journal, whose review was 'mixed'. Several points call for a response. First, the description of the book as 'jingoistic.' I work for the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) so my brief is naturally to talk about Australian companies. The book goes to great pains to say that imports matter as well as exports, that Australian companies learn from their partners in an international setting, and that openness to immigration has greatly benefited Australia both culturally and economically.

Second, Lodewijks says the author goes out of his way to praise the IMF with respect to Indonesia. On the contrary, the book actually discusses the important role that the RBA played in Indonesia in standing up to the IMF, and the introduction makes reference to the IMF flying around the region during the Asian financial crisis, and mixing up Malaysia and Indonesia on the spell check.

Third, to describe the book as pro-free trade agreement and not multilateralism is to misunderstand the nature of Austrade's work. Governments decide which instrument to use — or a combination — and Austrade's job is to promote the opportunities that may stem from the agreement. Gaining market access is necessary but not sufficient for exporters to flourish. Once the agreement is in place, Austrade's job is to talk about it so exporters know what is possible in that market.

Fourth, the book is criticised for not talking enough about human rights, inequality, and other social issues. While these things matter, that was not the purpose of *this* book.

In conclusion, it was fun to write the book and to receive responses from so many people about it. All the suggestions will be considered in preparing the sequel to *The Airport Economist*. Julia Gillard launched the first one as acting PM and now she's in the Lodge. So care will be needed in deciding who is asked to launch the next edition!

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