

Signing of CER agreement trans-Tasman trade ties

28 March 1983

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The Australia–New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement, better known as CER, was New Zealand’s first comprehensive bilateral trade agreement, and one of the first such agreements in the world.

CER came into force on 1 January 1983, but the agreement was not formally signed until 28 March, by New Zealand’s High Commissioner in Canberra, Laurie Francis, and Australia’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Lionel Bowen. CER built upon the New Zealand Australia Free Trade Agreement that had been implemented in 1966.

By 1990, there was free trade in goods and nearly all services between the two countries. In recent years they have moved towards even closer cooperation in policies, laws and regulatory regimes. CER became a model for other bilateral trade relationships. It was described by the World Trade Organization as ‘the world’s most comprehensive, effective and mutually compatible free trade agreement’.

updated 7th edition ref.

Image: New Zealand Prime Minister Robert Muldoon signs the Heads of Agreement document for Closer Economic Relations in December 1982.

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