

Rt hon Liz Truss MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for International Trade  
King Charles Street  
Whitehall  
London  
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10<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Secretary of State

### **Vehicle Safety Standards and Free Trade Agreements**

We understand that negotiations with the Governments of USA and Australia are underway on comprehensive free trade agreements (FTAs) that would include the automotive sector. PACTS welcomes measures to support the UK automotive sector with which we collaborate on vehicle safety matters.

We recognise that in international trade negotiations each side will seek concessions to suit its domestic suppliers, including safety standards. We note that in negotiations covering food safety the USA has argued against accepting the higher UK standards for food contamination and animal welfare. It has sought to characterise these as protectionism and argued that such matters should be left to the consumer.

We are concerned that pressure for lower safety standards in FTAs will be applied in negotiations regarding the automotive sector. The road network and vehicle fleet in the USA are very different to those in the UK: SUVs and light pick-up trucks form the majority of private vehicles. US vehicle safety standards are much lower than those permitted for vehicles sold in the UK. They have inferior front and side impact protection and almost none of the pedestrian protection standards adopted here.

If the UK were to permit imports of such vehicles it would have severe implications for UK road users, increasing casualties and deterring walking and cycling – policies supported by this Government. The UK has a relatively good road safety record. Improved vehicle safety standards, often based on UK R&D, have been a major factor in achieving this. By sad contrast, the USA has, for an advanced industrialised country, a poor record that is getting worse. Their path in vehicle safety is not one we should follow. Nor should it be left to consumer choice – this does not work.

Australia, though progressive in many aspects of road safety, also has vehicle safety standards inferior to those of the UK, particularly for pedestrian protection.

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We therefore urge you to ensure that

- no vehicle is imported to the UK with lower than EU vehicle safety standards;
- no vehicle is imported to the UK without recently agreed EU vehicle safety standards that will be mandated from 2022;
- the mutual recognition process for car safety standards focuses directly on comparisons with prescribed crash protection standards which affect the structure of vehicles and injury mitigation in the event of a collision, as well as Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) to prevent collisions.

We note that the SMMT also strongly urges no reduction in UK vehicle safety standards in FTAs.

We set out these issues more fully in our briefing note attached.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David G Davies', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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cc Rt Hon Grant Shapps, Emily Thornberry, Angus MacNeil