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Chalmers Faces Pressure to Deliver on Reform in Canberra

August 5, 2025

– Categories: General News



Canberra, Australia Treasurer Jim Chalmers is under pressure to turn this month's economic reform roundtable into real change, rather than just another political talkfest.

Set for August 19–21, the event brings together leaders from across business, unions, and government to address three major goals: boosting productivity, strengthening the budget, and improving the economy's resilience.

Chalmers has already held nearly 75 meetings with industry leaders in sectors such as retail, banking, transport, technology, and superannuation. In total, over 900 submissions have been received ahead of the gathering, which will be held in the cabinet room at Parliament House.

More than 40 separate mini-roundtables with ministers have also been convened in the lead-up, covering issues like health, housing, ageing, and women's economic reform.

One of the major focuses will be on cutting red tape. Chalmers is promoting deregulation as a way to unlock growth, citing the book *Abundance* to support his case. However, deregulation efforts in Australia have faced challenges before. Similar attempts under the Abbott government were criticised as superficial, and opposition from interest groups often slows down progress.

Business groups are calling for tax reform and reduced regulatory burdens, while unions are pushing for changes to negative gearing and stronger protections for workers. Meanwhile, issues such as how to regulate artificial intelligence are sparking debate within the group.

Chalmers has set clear “guardrails” for proposals they must serve the national interest, be budget-neutral or positive, and be practical to implement. But many submissions are already testing those boundaries, especially on the budget front.

Former Productivity Commission chief Michael Brennan and former ACCC chair Rod Sims are among those invited to contribute on key issues like competition and regulation.

While no formal communique will be released at the end of the roundtable, it's expected the government will identify areas for further work particularly in tax and investment policy.

The Prime Minister will open the event but is allowing Chalmers to lead the process. While Anthony Albanese and Chalmers are aligned on key issues, there's speculation about how much political capital the PM is willing to invest in bold reforms.

As Chalmers works to balance the demands of stakeholders, several business and policy groups have publicly called for the roundtable to produce concrete steps toward economic reform rather than remaining a forum for policy discussion.