



16 April, 2021

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Email: jsct@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Re: Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement.

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union represents over 70,000 workers who create, make and maintain. The AMWU has a long history of opposing bad trade deals that leave Australian workers and our community worse off. Many of our members work in industries that are heavily exposed to trade, and they need their government to stand up for their high-skill, high-wage jobs, rather than stand by and let them go offshore.

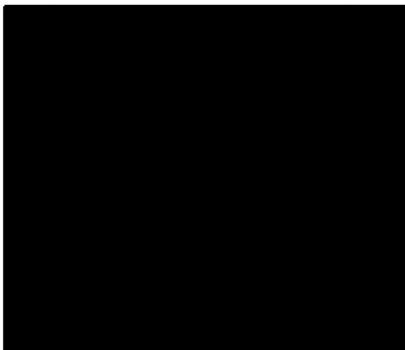
The AMWU supports and endorses the submissions from the ACTU and AFTINET to this inquiry. These submissions highlight the many flaws of this agreement and the process that was used to make it. We wish to draw the Committee's attention to some particularly troubling aspects of the RCEP.

Yet again our government has missed an opportunity to secure improved wages and conditions for workers in other countries. While the government has agreed to enforceable rules that will limit its own ability to ensure that workers are only granted visas if they are meeting identified skills shortages, it has not secured any enforceable labour rights chapters that would prevent exploitation of workers in products that are being sold in Australia.

Further, the standstill and ratchet structure will limit the ability of future governments to undo the disastrous and unpopular privatisation of vital public services that has taken place in recent decades. This locks in future governments and limits their ability to take actions in the best interests of their community.

To make matters worse, despite giving away all this decision-making power and exposing Australian workers and communities to further uncertainty, there is no tangible, empirical evidence that this agreement will create any benefits for Australian worker or families.

The AMWU remains opposed to the current, secretive approach to making trade agreements which sees Australian citizens kept in the dark about the contents of an agreement until after it is signed. A much more inclusive and transparent process would lead to better outcomes. It is past time one was adopted.



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