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Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
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I am writing to object to the trade agreement process because it is secret and undemocratic.

It seems that Trade agreements are legally binding on governments but are negotiated in secrecy.

Trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) deal not only with traditional issues like import tariffs or taxes, but also with a range of domestic laws and policies which affect the Australian public's lives, such as the PBS, internet regulation, data privacy, cultural policies, food, tobacco and alcohol regulation, labour rights and environmental policies.

These policies must be decided through transparent, public democratic parliamentary processes, not secretly.

It is my understanding that the text is secret until the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers make the decision to sign the agreement without scrutiny beforehand by our Parliamentary representatives, after which nothing can be changed! Where is our democracy in this? This is a travesty.

Of particular concern to all Australians is that of the ISDS clauses which were previously rejected by our past governments, which permit agreements with one or more foreign countries that include investor state dispute settlements so that corporations outside Australia are able to sue and hence dictate to Australian governments, effectively, the kinds of laws they can and cannot make.

I recommend the following: That the entire text be made public beforehand, and that our Parliament be able to debate the content, and to vote on what aspects can remain and what are not acceptable.

Valerie E Lewis