

SUBMISSION 8 – Ms Sheriden Tate

By email

Received: 8 July 2015

Dear Committee Secretariat

I write to you regarding the China FTA.

It is a unethical job-destroying trade agreement that, undemocratically, has been negotiated in secret.

The FTA allows Chinese companies to bring in their own workforce for projects over \$150 million and removes the requirement that jobs be offered to local workers first, effectively putting local workers at risk of being shut out of jobs.

All workers will lose under this agreement. Overseas workers risk being seriously exploited as this trade deal has no commitments to respect workers' rights. According to the international trade union movement China is already one of the ten worst places to be a worker. Local workers will face jobs losses and lose of job opportunities and the risk of their rights in the work place being severely eroded.

Chinese project companies can negotiate the numbers, occupations to be covered, English language requirements, qualifications and experience, and pay rates. Australian minimum rates and working conditions are meant to apply. But the minimum wage to be paid to the temporary migrant workers will be the subject of negotiation and may be less than the actual market rates paid to Australian workers in the industry. This means that a large proportion of the workforce could be brought in by the investor at lower than market rates. Their employment would be totally dependent on that employer, they would be isolated from the rest of the Australian workforce and would be vulnerable to exploitation.

It could cost as many as 158,000 local jobs because of cheap Chinese imports that are unfairly subsidised and do not meet Australian standards.

The Australian Industry Group says half the local manufacturers it surveyed are concerned that the removal of tariffs on Chinese imports will have a negative effect on their businesses. and only 11% say it will help

I am also very concerned the agreement will allow Chinese companies to sue our government if our laws adversely impact on their business and their profits. The exact criteria that could be used for such cases is not spelt out in the agreement, but left to be negotiated in three years, and will be incorporated in to the agreement without voting by Parliament. Look at the example of Phillip Morris suing us for plain cigarette packaging laws that are saving lives.

The Agreement also contains no commitments from either Government to enforce environmental standards putting Australia at risk of environmental damage.

Australia cannot afford this Free Trade Agreement.

Unemployment is too high, especially for our young people. This is of particular concern for me as I personally know of a number of people who have lost jobs or cannot get employment particularly young people. This is extremely demoralising for those who are keen to work and are making every effort to gain employment and it places them and their families under stress. We need to create jobs for local workers, not destroy them. With youth unemployment the highest in a decade I question the intelligence of a Trade Agreement jeopardising the future of our children and denying them job opportunities and I question selling this country and its people to serve the interests of Foreign entities.

The Australian Parliament is being asked to vote for the implementing legislation for this agreement without having the details of what these provisions may mean in the future. This is unacceptable.

Please stop the China FTA by recommending that Parliament vote against the implementing legislation.

Yours sincerely

Sheriden Tate - Victoria