



JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TREATIES

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 17 March 2004

Wednesday, 17 March 2004

Call for public comment on the US Free Trade Agreement

The public has four weeks to lodge submissions to comment on the proposed Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the United States.

An invitation for public submissions on the AUSFTA was published in *The Australian* newspaper today. Submissions will close on April 13 and be followed by a series of public hearings at various locations around Australia, starting on April 19.

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties is expecting to report back to Parliament by June 23.

The Committee will carry out an open and accountable inquiry into the AUSFTA. It has the expertise to handle such an important review.

It was established by the Howard Government in 1996 to specifically look at treaties to be signed by the Australian Government, such as the AUSFTA.

The Treaties Committee has 16 members, including six from the Labor Party and is backed by a secretariat that has comprehensive experience in examining treaties.

The inquiry is an important stage in the democratic process because it allows people to have their say before the proposed AUSFTA legislation is debated in Parliament.

The Committee is following the same open public process that applies to other treaties.

(A copy of the public inquiry timetable is attached.)

Andrew Southcott is Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties



Australia-US Free Trade Agreement

Public Inquiry Timetable

Date	Action/ Location
April 19	Sydney
April 20	Melbourne
April 21	Hobart
April 22	Adelaide
April 23	Perth
May 3	Darwin
May 4	Cairns
May 5	Brisbane
May 6	Sydney
May 14	Canberra

This program is subject to change. More hearings may be announced as the inquiry progresses. Submissions should be emailed to: jsct@aph.gov.au or sent by post to:

The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
R1-109
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Committee would appreciate receiving submissions by email or on disc to assist with the electronic publishing of submissions.

A full text of the Agreement can be found at www.dfat.gov.au. It is in draft form and subject to legal review for accuracy, clarity and consistency.

(Ends.)