



## Treaties Committee recommends against passing the *Treaties Ratification Bill 2012*

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties today tabled its report recommending against passing the *Treaties Ratification Bill 2012*.

Mr Bob Katter MP (Kennedy – QLD) introduced this Bill into the House of Representatives in February of this year to address what he perceives as the undemocratic nature of treaty negotiation and implementation. Mr Katter is concerned that the treaties Australia is entering into are economically damaging to the Australian economy and that Australia's sovereignty is being eroded.

Treaties Committee Chair, Kelvin Thomson MP, said "the way in which trade treaties are negotiated continues to be a matter of controversy and the Committee recognises the community's concern".

"The Treaties Committee considered these issues during its study of the Australia-Chile Free-Trade Agreement in 2008", Mr Thomson said. "At the time, the Committee recommended that a more thorough cost/benefit assessment of treaties be provided by the Government. The Committee re-iterates that sentiment in this report with the following Recommendation:

*That prior to commencing negotiations for a new agreement, the Government table in Parliament a document setting out its priorities and objectives, including the anticipated costs and benefits of the agreement."*

"However, the Bill would present a number of practical and political problems to both the Parliament and the executive government, if passed as presented. The sheer number of treaties has the potential to overwhelm the Parliamentary process and the Bill's lack of a provision for short-term emergency treaties makes it unworkable."

"Although other models exist overseas which may add a greater degree of Parliamentary scrutiny to the treaties review process, the Bill is a very brief document which allows little room for amendment without a comprehensive change of its intent", Mr Thomson said.

The Committee's views on the Bill are covered in Report 128, which is available on the Committee's website:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House\\_of\\_Representatives\\_Committees?url=jsct/reports.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jsct/reports.htm) or by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

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