

## **SINGAPORE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT - SUBMISSION TO JSCOT**

### **Public Consultation & Parliamentary Oversight.**

There has been no community consultation on SAFTA. Until now there has been no opportunity for input from other than government and industry groups. Therefore it is important that JSCOT considers carefully this and submissions from other individuals and community organisations.

JSCOT consideration and report should precede the introduction to Parliament of SAFTA implementation legislation.

To open up the process there should be a thorough and open debate of all aspects of the agreement before it is implemented.

Further there should be a public consultation prior to and in association with the review of the agreement.

### **Negative List approach for services & investment.**

The negative list approach which is written into SAFTA was roundly rejected by the community when it was proposed in the decisively defeated MAI model which bit the dust in 1998.

This approach ties the government's hands in relation to omissions and restricts their future ability to implement policies at variance with the agreement.

### **Restriction of the right of state and federal governments to regulate services**

The definition of "social services established for a public purpose" is unacceptably restrictive. There is a plethora public services for all of which governments must retain the right to regulate.

JSCOT should oppose any restriction of local, state, and federal governments to regulate essential services and investment.

### **Investment disputes process would allow corporations to sue governments.**

The enforcement process proposed is the NAFTA/MAI model which places corporations in a dominant position vis-à-vis governments. This is an unacceptable offence to democratic governance. In the NAFTA scene it has resulted in the Canadian and Mexican governments facing invidious and unjust actions by Corporations which have cost their constituents millions of dollars.

The proposed investor state complaints mechanism is unreasonable and should be rejected by this democratically elected government.

### **Government procurement (purchasing) policy**

It would be unconscionable for an Australian government to give up (as is proposed in SAFTA) its right and ability to encourage regional development through the application of Government purchasing policy favouring Australian industry.

The right of Australian governments at all levels to use purchasing policy for industry and regional development must be retained.

### **Conclusion**

The SAFTA is an anathema. In its present form it would abrogate the democratic ability of Australian governments to operate in the best interest of the nation. It should be rejected by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.

Ron Clifton.  
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