

TT 4 March 2003
Submission No:

**SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TREATIES
ON THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT WITH SINGAPORE**

We ask that no agreement be signed which would in any way limit the power of Parliament or the Government to legislate or act on behalf of the best interests of the Australian people.

We see as most important the safeguarding of essential services such as safe water, affordable pharmaceuticals and health services. Equitable pricing for postal and telephone services is also important.

High quality Australian content in film, T.V., drama and music will continue to play an important role in keeping our Australian identity and culture alive. This will mean continued high subsidies and we ask that these are assured.

As you can see from these examples we are concerned that the "negative list" approach to services and investment could have a detrimental effect on Australians and we therefore ask that these be removed from the treaty.

LEAVING OUR CHOICES FOR NEW ECONOMIC MODELS OPEN

We share the concern of many Australians with the continuing deterioration of our environment and the difficulties many have in making ends meet. We would therefore ask that avenues for economic change are not closed. We hope that in the future Australia's economy will be able to change from one where growth is valued to one that meets the needs of everyone.

Another problem is what some describe as the commodification of labour. The commodification of labour is the outcome of compensating workers according to the laws of supply and demand. This reduces workers to a commodity and means they must accept the price of the market irrespective of the needs of themselves and their family. As a consequence many outworkers in the garment industry are earning as little as one or two dollars an hour. Dairy farmers face a similar economic predicament. A better balance between the needs of workers and the mechanisms of the free market must be sought. We would reject the notion that human labour has a value based only on its economic value. Work is also a service and the work environment can often provide a cooperative and supportive environment. At best it is an exchange of many gifts and skills. The fact that money is the main medium of exchange does not mean we should close off other possibilities. We would do well to encourage cultures and knowledge that inform us about choices which are more compatible with human nature and the resources of our planet.

Permaculture ethics is a good example. Permaculture has a basic "life" ethic in that it recognises the intrinsic worth of every living thing. It pervades all aspects of environmental, community and economic systems. Cooperation not competition is the key. Permaculture's threefold ethics are (1) Care of the earth, (2) Care of people and (3) the contribution of our surplus time, money and energy care for the earth and its people. We ask therefore that possibilities for the support and carrying out of ethical principles are not overlooked in the rush for growth and an ever rising G.D.P.

We would therefore ask that the Free Trade Agreement with Singapore will not limit the possibilities for the types of changes we have suggested. We consider it particularly important that there are no restrictions on State and Local Governments to provide and regulate services whether they be in the form of markets, exchanges or other initiatives which come out of the inspiration of individuals or groups where they have been planned and set up to be of service and mutual benefit.

Jan de Voogd
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