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**From:** Barb & Gus King [SMTP:b.a.king@bigpond.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, August 25, 2000 12:00 AM  
**To:** jsct@aph.gov.au  
**Subject:** Comments on Australia's relationship with the World Trade Organisation

The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

re: Comments on Australia's relationship with the World Trade Organisation

Dear sir/madam

I would like the Committee to be aware of the following comments on the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Most comments relate to the need for International politics to become more the politics of the environment rather than the politics of trade.

A still valid warning was made by the Head of Environment at GATT prior to UNCED when he commented that "free trade would bring no automatic dividend" ... "trade is a magnifier. If you are trading in things that are destroying the environment, free trade will mean you destroy more".

- Although WTO is more environmentally conscious than GATT it is still very much an economic body. It needs to be even more environmentally conscious.
- We need to minimise the movement of materials and goods to reduce the impacts of energy consumed in transport and other environmental impacts. For example, the transport of marine organisms on the hulls of ships is introducing these organisms into environments where they have no natural predators leading to the destruction of local ecosystems. Recent media reports on Darwin harbour highlight just one example.
- We need to encourage local production and consumption of goods rather than producing goods at the location of the 'least cost' producer. Local production helps balance labour on a permanent basis rather than seeing labour 'utilisation' fluctuate as multinationals move production from one source of labour to another.
- There should be more focus on the transfer of basic data, scientific knowledge and environmentally sound technology rather than the production of physical goods. This will have the advantage of deploying (environmental) improvements in technology as quickly and widely as possible to enable unsound technologies to be retired as soon as possible.
- National laws and policies should take precedence over WTO and multi-lateral agreements. Further (protection of) environmental agreements should take precedence over the WTO, which is essentially an economic trade agreement.
- To minimise unfair protectionism and bias in trade agreements most should be implemented/practised in a reciprocal manner.

- Social, cultural and especially environmental considerations should be paramount in terms of WTO priorities and decision making.

Yours sincerely

Angus King