

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Fiona Bryer [SMTP:F.Bryer@mailbox.gu.edu.au]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 09, 2000 7:07 PM  
**To:** jsct@aph.gov.au  
**Subject:** WTO

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

Public consultation on decisions committing Australia to WTO agreements needs to be transparent. I have no grounds to believe that my best interest and my ethical concerns are addressed in many of these negotiations.

The whole issue of genetic modification of food resources (e.g., frankenfood) and "escaped" breeding of modified food is of major concern. The apparent willingness of businesses in this field to MAKE GENETIC CHANGES without reasonable regard to the possibility of catastrophic and possibly irreversible accidents in the larger ecology is not comforting. At a local level, I do not want to find that I am denied the right to reject modified food without being regarded as a Luddite. There is an underlying dangerousness to this technology that is being treated as reasonable risk rather than unknown risk.

WTO approaches to quarantine may not adequately serve Australian's interests. Quarantine in Australia is an area requiring more systematic examination of the issues across a large and diverse continent. There are already some gross idiosyncracies in quarantine. Dogs, especially immature dogs, from Europe and North America are subjected to long tortorous quarantine periods, primarily to sustain the businesses providing "quarantining." DOGS ARE HARMED UNNECESSARILY BY THIS PROCESS. Yet salmon products from countries with health risks capable of causing severe damage to Australian industries are considered viable entries. Tasmania wishes to pursue one of its few advantages in world trade--that is relative purity of the natural environment--and Tasmania needs the right to choose whether to accept imported salmon, both because there is a scientific risk and because they have a marketing strategy based on purity that should be not undermined by product from markets where there are problems of disease.

Environment and human rights are CRITICAL aspects of trade around the world. It is intolerable that Australia, which has a relatively clean environment and high expectations about human rights, should disregard these trade aspects in favour of the economic efficiency and business profit that exploits environmental and human resources in settings where they are not so well-defended.

RESPONSIBILITY to participate in international agreements never overrides national RIGHTS to protect its citizens' lives and quality of life. The

Australian quality of life is not negotiable to minimal requirements. Anyone who has left Australia is vividly aware of the widespread squalor that constitutes normal living in many other places of the world. Trade that pushes us in that direction is unwelcome; Trade should advance interests and improve all parties' circumstances; Exploitation by trade is the major reason that the world is in such a rotten condition in postcolonial countries. Trade needs to have win-win equations built in; otherwise it simply pushes us all closer to the brink. We already have some predictions that absolute world resources are declining and that we will eventually have to adopt communal localised servicing of our major life needs. Yet we have an apparently infinite capacity to exploit these resources. If the species is to survive to "enjoy" that lifestyle, then "trade" needs to ensure that it is not simply ignoring the dissipation of world resources in the pursuit of the profit that simply makes the life of the wealthy more profligate in the short-term.

No agreement can be made that compromises democracy. In a world where democracy is rare and always under threat, there are NO GROUNDS to assume that profit-making business can be trusted to supercede decision making by democratically elected governments. Maybe democracy isn't perfect, but at least it keeps respect for humanity (perhaps generalisable to the planet and its other occupants).

I understand and support any disquiet about engaging Australia in WTO agreements that do not spell out clearly the advantages to everyone and not the benefits to business profit making capacity, whether Australian agribusiness or "global business corporate entities.

What is world trade doing to this world? If it is further exercise of power by the powerful and if this exercise of power seeks to use the law to enforce that power against my interests and ethical concerns, then I urge that your committee address themselves to ensuring a more transparent process. THE G7 meeting in Japan with its extravagant funding does not suggest that such international decision-making is reflective and self-critical or aims to achieve any genuine outcomes of positive benefit to this world.

In hope that Australia is able to make constructive efforts to explore a meaningful relationship with the WTO, not a self-serving and self-defeating relationship.

Fiona Bryer  
156 Tamborine Mtn Rd  
Tamborine Qld 4270