

Submission No: .....17.....

(your name) B. BEITSCH  
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2455

*Dear Sir* July 2003  
(date)

*Trade Minister Mark Vaile MP.*

Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**COMBINED PENSIONERS & SUPERANNUANTS ASSOC.  
OF N.S.W. INC.**

**URUNGA BRANCH RECEIVED**  
**13 APR 2004**

Dear

I am worried about the threat that the proposed Free Trade Agreement BY:.....  
between Australia and the United States poses to the Pharmaceutical Benefits  
Scheme (PBS).

The PBS is an essential part of Australia's public health care system. It  
ensures that Australians have access to medicines at affordable prices. Other  
countries look to the PBS as a successful model of equitable health care.

I understand that the US group PhRMA who represents major drug  
companies, thinks its members do not receive a sufficiently high price for the  
drugs they sell the Australian Government and is seeking changes to obtain  
higher profits.

It is widely documented that the pharmaceutical industry had been the most  
profitable industry in the US for the past decade, and last year sales were  
approximately 250 billion dollars. The pharmaceutical industry spends three  
times as much on marketing and advertising as it does on research and  
development of new drugs. Lipitor the world's first 10 billion dollar drug, is  
produced by US company Pfizer and is a cholesterol reducer. Many of the  
other top ten drug sales are anti-depressants, anti-psychotics, and anti-  
ulcerants.

The Australian Government says that the US drug companies do not  
want to dismantle the PBS but I am concerned about attempts to undermine  
price controls that ensure the Australian community gets value for money  
when the Government buys medicines on its behalf for inclusion on the PBS.

I call on the Australian Government to reject any attempt by the US  
Government to make the PBS a bargaining chip in the negotiations for a Free  
Trade Agreement and that it tell the US that Australia will not accept changes  
that undermine the PBS and its guarantee of providing essential medicines to  
all Australians at affordable prices.

Sincerely

*Brenda Beitsch*  
*Hon. Secretary*