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NEWMARKET Qld 4051
5 April 2004

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
R1-109 Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

AUSFTA -
Submission No:118.....

SUBMISSION RE AUSTRALIA US FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (USFTA)

I am opposed to the proposed USFTA which the Australian Government wants to sign as I do not believe it would produce the benefits to Australia which were originally promised.

I understand that in the original study by the CIE economic consultants commissioned by the Australian Government with the expectation of totally free trade in agriculture, only 0.3% gain for the Australian economy was predicted over 10 years, and that even this small gain was contradicted by other economic studies which predicted losses.

As the proposed agreement does not provide for totally free trade in agriculture, for example it excludes sugar, and any benefits to cattle and dairy producers would be phased in over many years, one cannot expect that even that small 0.3% gain would be achieved.

I understand that the Australian Government has asked the same CIE economic consultants to conduct another study. Why would the Government ask the same organisation to conduct the new study when doubt was cast on their previous study?

I believe that when the US entered WWII after the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbour, our war-time Prime Minister Curtin told President Roosevelt that he appreciated the USA's help in the war effort, but he (Mr Curtin) was in control in Australia.

It seems to me that the proposed USFTA would allow the USA to interfere in decisions which Australia should make to protect Australian interests, for example, in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, changes to Patents Laws, restriction on the regulation of investments to give USA investors increased freedom, restrictions on government services at all levels of government in Australia, including health, education, energy, postal and environmental services.

The arts community is concerned about ensuring that Australian content in films, television and music is retained. Under the proposed USFTA existing local content quotas are "bound", and if they are reduced in future, they cannot later be restored to the present levels. In addition, future Australian Governments would be limited in what legislative action they could take regarding new media. Why would our present Government want to give the USA power to restrict future Australian Governments in this way when new electronic inventions are to be expected?

The proposed removal of remaining tariffs on motor vehicles and parts, and on textiles, clothing and footwear would have a negative effect on employment.

Libraries and education bodies would suffer from higher costs if copyright is extended from 50 to 70 years. I would support having the public inquiry which has been recommended by the Australian Intellectual Property and Competition Review Committee before copyright is extended.

I do not believe the proposed USFTA is in Australia's interest and would request that the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties recommend that it not be signed by Australia without major alterations to ensure that Australia's decision making powers are not assigned to another country.

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16 APR 2004

Vera Raymer
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BY:.....