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**From:** Shane Elson [SMTP:sgels1@net-tech.com.au]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 05, 2000 5:17 PM  
**To:** jsct@aph.gov.au  
**Subject:** WTO Relationship Submission

The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties  
jsct@aph.gov.au

To The Honourable Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a further submission to the Committee. The WTO as an organisation has been receiving a great deal of attention in the last 2 years, and as such, deservedly so.

Recent comments by our Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and others seem to indicate their concerns regarding "unelected" people in NGO's making decisions that reflect negatively on Australia's global position. While this sentiment has been aimed at Human Rights bodies, their statements seem to indicate a growing concern among some in community regarding such "self appointed" bodies and their sponsors. The WTO is one such body.

Although the WTO membership does contain Government representation, the peak decision making body of the WTO, that which is a "court of arbitration" whose decisions are final and non-negotiable, is unelected and unknown. Echoing the words of our senior politicians and I agree with them on this, we need to review all our relationships with such bodies.

While I am not opposed to global trade per se, I do have concerns regarding the conduct of such trade and the "rules" governing that conduct. We cannot escape the fact that as a nation we are part of the "global economy", however, a wide ranging, representative and inclusive dialogue has yet been had regarding the nature of that involvement. Our trade and economic elites have engaged fully in the process of globalisation and at the same time have wrought unintended consequences on many communities. While Australia is not alone on this point, it is that which should concern us the most.

The issues are complex, sometimes delicate and always controversial. Nevertheless, I would urge the Committee to pursue outcomes that will benefit the citizens of Australia with a mind towards the ramifications of our collective actions on other cultures.

In closing I would also urge the Committee to adopt a proactive stance in relation to the links between human and civil rights abuses and the effects of the global market place. If our global economy is truly to bring gain to all, then we must, as a nation do all we can to ensure that we uphold the

highest ethical and moral standards in our deliberations and considerations of global trade. Whether the WTO is the most effective organisation to uphold these standards is yet to be determined. However, its past record leaves little doubt that as a peak body, its considerations are not always grounded in the needs of humanity. Recent decisions by unelected bodies who are somehow able to impose repressive and exorbitant "fines" on nation states who breach trade "rules" leave one wondering who is actually determining our future; we the people, or unrepresentative NGO peak groups.

My hope is that we the people will benefit from your deliberations by virtue of its just, fair and equitable outcomes.

Shane Elson  
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