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Submission No:20.....

From: jean_jack_br [jean_jack_br@no1.com.au]
Sent: Friday, 2 May 2003 11:00 AM
To: Committee, Treaties (REPS)
Subject: Submission on Singapore Australia Free Trade Agreement

My concerns regarding this SAFTA negotiation is that it appears to be restrictive, particularly if one looks beyond today's issues, of the Australian democratic processes and governance. The imposition of the proposals, as they appear to stand, will have a long term impact on state and local government regulation of services. Any new regulations must be consistent with the agreement - that is locked into the present circumstances and time frame.

If the committee persists in support for a negative list model for services and investments in trade agreements then it is highly likely that unintentional outcomes and undue restrictions will be placed on future government policies. If the Singapore government is able to use the general dispute process to challenge regulation of services which are now not listed as exceptions, as it constitutes a barrier to trade it leaves Australia with an unacceptable limitation on democratic governance.

Currently our government's deference to stronger economic forces are working to the detriment of our self sustainability and potential to take initiatives. Our small rural industries, even the gaps in rural health service provisions could be ripe for imposing solutions that are inconsistent with our cultural, scientific and economic hopes and expectations.

I urge this committee not to support an investor state complaints mechanism as it will obliterate transparency on what happens to Australian's ideas and endeavours in Australia. Unemployment in some fledgling industries will expand if we must accept the definition emerging on a global scale of "one taste suits all" mentality.

Any review is more grounded in the public's interest if public community consultation at a wider scope than presently is in process. Then the Parliament is positioned to consider implications for our National identity as unique and sustain this concept when any trade negotiations are to be verified on the basis of your committee's findings and advice.

Yours sincerely

Jean Braithwaite [an older experienced female Australian national]

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