

AUSFTA
Submission No: 208

Wilson, Frances (REPS)

From: Greg Hayes [greg@virtualgroup.com.au]
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To: Committee, Treaties (REPS)
Subject: Australia-US FTA

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BY:.....

As a taxpayer, farmer, health service consumer, ex-international consultant and proud Australian I object to the current version of the agreement. My reasons in brief are set out below.

1. I understand that almost all the benefits estimated to flow from the FTA relate to the freeing up of investment restrictions and the expected impact that this will have in boosting incoming investment from the US. Why not achieve such benefits by simply amending the regulations to permit freer access and why restrict such freer access to the US. This would avoid having to have a FTA at all with all its attendant negatives.
2. The only sector of agriculture that will benefit substantively from the FTA is the sugar industry which has been given an undeserved handout from other taxpayers. By agreeing to this FDA we are putting Australia at a disadvantage in relation to the previously effective leadership of the Cairns Group through the WTO since that group has always argued for multi-lateral rather than bi-lateral deals. Already we are seeing the downside of bilateral deals with Brazil being invited to discuss bilateral concessionary arrangements with the EU.
3. My general point on the international trade is that multi-lateralism is always better than bilateralism and that what we are doing with this FTA (in the case of agriculture particularly) is delaying any prospect of substantive benefit (eg 18 year phase in period for beef) while making it harder for Australia to continue to lobby for multilateral agreements that would offer much wider benefits. I recognise that the WTO route has proved painfully slow but at least it was the first-best approach and one that eventually will bring benefits not only to Australia but to other (much worse off) nations in the developing world. So it could be argued that, by giving away efforts to fight through the WTO (and I dont accept that we will be able to effectively continue that fight post this FTA) we are taking away in one hand all if not more than that which we offer developing countries under our overseas development assistance.
4. As a health service consumer I am disgusted by the attempts this Govt has made to disguise the obvious intent of the US to force us to modify our PBS. No amount of spin will cover the reality that the US drug companies are going to roll this through review processes etc. It just shouldn't be tolerated especially as there are so few other changes to come out of the FTA.
5. As a proud Australian I dont want to see our Govt bending over backwards to accommodate US interests. We have managed to develop a wonderful body of talent in drama and television and films and we dont want any outside influences doing anything that will make it more difficult to keep that talent pool increasing. We already have too much US culture in my opinion and we should find ways to support local talent wherever possible.

I dont hold out much hope that these comments will make any difference but at least I feel better for trying!
 Yours sincerely

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