

## **SUBMISSION**

**To:**

The Secretary  
Joint Standing committee on Treaties  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**By:**

Penny Ramsey  
For and on behalf of Citizens for Democratic and Fair Trade

“Australia’s relationship with the World Trade Organisation”

### Introduction

Any Treaty or Agreement with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) must serve the interests of Australia and its citizens and should not negatively affect our Human Rights, Environment, Labour and Cultural sovereignty. We believe there must always be the opportunity for intervention and regulation in the interests of Australian citizens.

### Environment

Any Agreement with the WTO:

- Must comply with International OECD commitments to integrate economic, environmental and social policies and must not undermine sustainable development agreed to at the Rio Earth Summit 1992.
- Must not be in conflict with any existing and future international, national and sub national laws and regulations protecting the environment and natural resources and must not cause any to be repealed or deter the adoption of new legislation, or the strengthening of existing ones.

### Human Rights

Any Agreement with the WTO:

- Must not conflict with the Goals and Objectives of International Human Rights Law as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination(CERD).
- Must not limit a State’s power to promote the development of its own populace and resources as required under international treaties including ICESCR and ICCPR.
- Must not undermine a State’s ability to protect vulnerable groups and regions as demanded by human rights covenants.
- Must not prohibit the State from utilising human rights criteria in the formulation and execution of investment policies.

- (in dispute resolution procedures) must not exclude individuals who may be harmed by an Agreement's provisions, thus inhibiting procedural fairness.

### Labour and Culture

Any Agreement with the WTO must not undermine:

- community reinvestment requirements
- living wage laws
- specific job-creation schemes for government-subsidised companies
- preferential treatment for environmental and socially responsible companies and progressive new policies being developed
- local content quotas, export requirements and requirements to employ local staff (e.g. Media Industries)

Australia's schemes of assistance to the film and television industry, for instance, are essential, not just for Australia, but as part of a global web of support measures in small countries, designed to ensure that the world's audiovisual economy is not completely dominated by the images and sounds of Hollywood. Australia's cultural sovereignty is essential if we are to have any identity within globalisation.

### Conclusion

We believe there must be public debate, participation and input when developing any Treaty or Agreement with the WTO. We believe that there should be transparent and public participation with a democratic input into the substance of all agreements with a strong emphasis on Environmental, Human Rights, Labour/Health and Cultural policies.

The recent demonstrations at the World Economic Forum have shown that the public are concerned with World Trade or do not understand it. Our relationship with the WTO must be open and transparent with community participation to enable better understanding.

We believe that Human Rights and Environmental laws must be placed above Economic concerns and Multinational profits if we are to live in a world which strives to meet the basic needs of all its people.

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