

**SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE
REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TRADE IN
SERVICES AND AUSTRALIA/US FREE TRADE AGREEMENT**

SUBMISSION

Submission No: 146

Submittor: Mr Dick Copeman

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No. of Pages: 2

Attachments: No



40 Glenrosa Road
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9th April '03

The Secretary
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
Suite S1.57, Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Re: Negotiation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)
in the Doha development Round of the WTO**

I write to express my concern at the implications for Australia of the proposed GATS agreement.

In particular, I am concerned that Australia's signing on to the GATS will lead inevitably to privatisation and overseas ownership of essential services including public health services, public sector schools, water supplies and postal services. As we have seen with water, electricity and banking, privatisation often leads to poorer service for consumers and loss of control of Australian assets to overseas corporations.

I welcome the government's recent release of its offers under the GATS process. I particularly welcome the fact that no new offers have been made on health, education, postal services, water for human use or audio visual services and that there are no changes to the Foreign Investment Review Board or to the limitations on foreign investment in Telstra.

However, I am concerned that proposed changes to GATS rules on regulation and proposed changes to the definition of subsidies to include funding of public services could affect the ability of governments to regulate services and to provide and fund public services.

I am also concerned that environmental services including "protection of biodiversity and landscape", "protection of ambient air and climate" and "noise and vibration abatement" have been added to Australia's offer without limitations on either market access or national treatment. These are core responsibilities of government which should not be able to be contracted out to private contractors, whether from Australia or overseas.

I urge your committee to recommend to the government that it:

- rescind the offers mentioned above in relation to environmental services
- ask for all public services to be clearly excluded from coverage by the GATS.

- In particular, it should maintain its exclusion of health, education, water supply, postal services and crewing of Australian ships from any GATS offers.

The experience of court cases mounted under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) shows that large multinational corporations are the main beneficiaries of the liberalisation of trade in services. The rest of the society loses out most of the time.

I am sure that you will consider these matters carefully and produce some good recommendations. I would be pleased if you would send me a copy of your recommendations, preferably electronically, at dcopeman@powerup.com.au

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dick Copeman', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Dick Copeman

cc. Arch Bevis, MP for Brisbane.