

**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: 17

Submittor: Combined Pensioners and Superannuants
Association of New South Wales Inc (CPSA)

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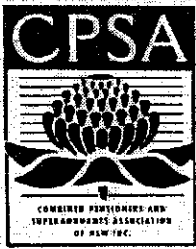
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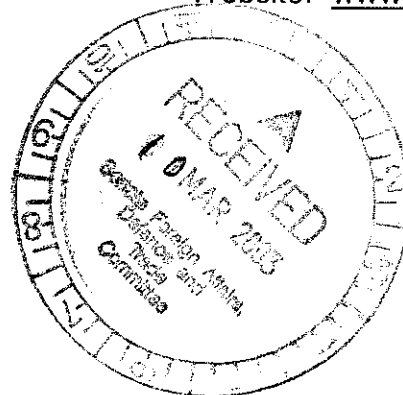


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**SUBMISSION:
OPPOSITION TO SECRETIVE GATS TRADE NEGOTIATIONS.
6th March 2003**

The ***Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW Inc. (CPSA)*** submits as follows on the matter of highly secretive, undemocratic trade talks between the Australian Federal government and other unnamed parties on the *General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)*:

Pensioners, Superannuants and self funded retirees in common with other disadvantaged Australians are becoming increasingly concerned at the demands imposed by the so called 'New World Order' upon the ordinary citizens of the globe for no better reason than to facilitate trade with no concern to deriving benefit to those same citizens.

It is felt that such demands include the fragmentation, or worse, total extinction of popular and socially necessary Public Services. That the demands, including agreements such as GATS, are made in secret make them all the more heinous and despised. The dismantling of socially necessary services can do no more, or less, than create a disastrous social desert for humanity. These 'New World Order' demands as outlined above and any similar, must be rejected in the name of humanity and humaneness.

CPSA is concerned at the de-humanising outcomes of a number of "trade talks" the like of which debase, to the extent of total removal of

environmental protection laws, civil rights, labour standards and indeed everyday living standards and decency, mostly to the advantage of corporate greed and global power than to any other worthy humane aim.

One such instance is the existence of the *General Agreement in Services* (GATS) which CPSA utterly opposes because of the corrosive influence and general anti-social ideology of the demands therein contained.

Because of the secret nature of the negotiations and the secret fashion in which the blight of GATS was imposed upon Australia with the promise of more and worse to come, CPSA wishes to condemn governments which have brought to Australia the regressive concept of GATS – recognising the role of previous Labor governments in the secretive moves which, in the first place begot GATS to Australia.

CPSA and its members are becoming aware of the demands of GATS to denude Australia of much, if not all, socially necessary Public Enterprise for the benefit of those most advantaged by GATS – i.e. the rich and powerful – as represented by Corporations set up by, and for, those rich and powerful.

CPSA and its members are greatly concerned by the many signs emitted by the current Federal government showing that many of Australia's much appreciated and supported public services e.g. Health, Education, Communications, Transport etc. are coming under attack with the growingly obvious intent of removing public ownership in preference to private ownership.

CPSA's feeling of contempt for, and opposition to, the behaviour as described above, of the various governments including the current one, is exacerbated by the fact that GATS negotiations are conducted in secret – due to the very obvious reason that they are unpopular and would spark a popular revolt such as has never been seen in Australia!

CPSA is appalled in its understanding that Australia's Parliamentary Democracy is bypassed and treated with contempt by the Federal government in that decisions to ratify secretly held GATS negotiations held in foreign shores are ratified **ONLY** by Cabinet with no opportunity for either Parliamentary House to debate and indeed **REJECT** those agreements which disadvantage Australian citizens' interests.

CPSA furthermore condemns the apparent, some might say obvious, complicity of Australia's mediocre and totally biased media (including the now government stacked Public Broadcaster) in its lack of investigation and popular reportage in this matter so crucial to many Australian citizens' interests.

Considering recent extremely secretive participation of the current Federal government within GATS negotiations, the most critical and trenchant concerns held by CPSA and its members relate to Australia's PUBLIC Health care system upon which the lives of so many of Australia's senior citizens and other disadvantaged Australians so utterly depend.

Given a growing suspicion that, with secret Federal government support, the demands of the GATS organisation are aimed at the wholesale privatisation of public services, CPSA cannot avoid the perception that the Federal government's actions, including massive under-funding of MEDICARE and Bulk Billing, to be a clandestine attack of these institutions in adherence to GATS demands for privatisation of Public Health in common with other public services.

Also given the crucial importance of Public Health Services in aged and disadvantaged care, CPSA expresses great concern at the Federal government's obvious (despite its camouflage) apparently GATS-impelled anti-MEDICARE ideology. The alternative Private owned health care service would, in our opinion, be so cruel as to constitute a type of TERRORISM to the unfortunate major numbers of Australian citizens in need of good affordable Health care as can only be provided by a well managed PUBLIC Health system.

CPSA harbours great doubts on the veracity of the Prime Minister and his ministers when they state that they support the MEDICARE system given their reported massive withdrawal of funds from the Public Health system. These doubts are deepened by the memory of the Prime Minister's statements on "Core and non-core promises" and the infamous statement "GST?....never!"

CPSA and its members are furthermore greatly distressed by the Federal government's attacks upon Australia's much valued *Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme* (PBS).

CPSA attributes this attack on another of Australia's Health icons not only to the GATS negotiations but also the equally destructive bi-lateral

trade talks (also secret) between Australia and the United States within which we believe much pressure is being applied to negate the PBS in preference to 'open market' medicine – this would be disastrous to many Australians and cannot even be contemplated let alone put into effect!

Consequently CPSA is convinced that the Federal government is hell-bent to put into practice its anti-MEDICARE ideology without attracting the disapproval of voters.

The Federal government must not be allowed to get away with its duplicitous behaviour in connection to Australia's Public Health system mainly because what it appears to be aiming for would represent growing ill-health and loss of life for many disadvantaged Australians who would thus be unable to afford good health outcomes, including many of CPSA's members.

Similar arguments can be made in connection to many other socially necessary public services in Australia which face destruction in the hands of the twisted ideology of the 'New World Order' through GATS, WTO and bi-lateral trade talks. CPSA rejects all of these if they are not subject to TRANSPARENCY, DEMOCRACY and the ability of the people to VETO unacceptable proposals.

Accordingly CPSA submits:-

- That citizens and their representatives, through their various democratic institutions, which do not include the government's secretive talks with GATS, must force the government to reject all existing GATS agreements and WITHDRAW FROM ALL GATS negotiations until such time as GATS and other trade talks are held openly in the public gaze and subject to rejection by the popular process where they threaten critical social and public services or other Australian interests.
- That all GATS and other trade negotiations MUST BE debated in both houses of Parliament and indeed that some other democratic process be devised which provides for popular veto e.g. Referendum – since no real trust exists between elected and electors on this matter.

- A strong call upon all elected Parliamentarians to act to democratise – as called for above – the current untrustworthy, secretive negotiation process of GATS and other such trade talks.
- In the absence of progress to a more democratic trade talks process occurring within the Parliament of the Lower House, then that the Senate is **STRONGLY** called upon as the House of Review to act to ensure the interests of its Citizens by rejecting ALL and ANY GATS, WTO and other trade talks which do not follow a transparent and democratic process – a process totally lacking in the current situation.
- Ultimately, in addition to a transparent and **DEMOCRATIC** process, CPSA demands the total excision and protection from trade talks of all crucial and socially needed Public Services such as those mentioned above within this document.

Signed on behalf of
CPSA NSW Inc.



M. C. Mifsud JP
State President

Signed on behalf of
CPSA NSW Inc.



Bruce Hutton
State V/President