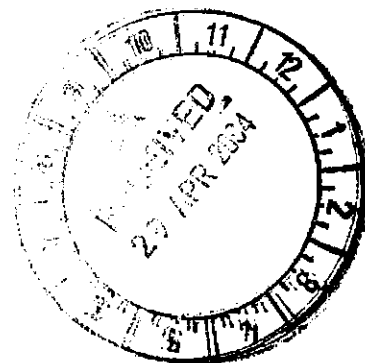


ROSALIND STAFFORD



20th April 2004

**The Senate Select Committee on the
United States Free Trade Agreement
Parliament House
CANBERRA 2600**

SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TREATIES THE AUSTRALIA/US FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (USFTA)

The above Agreement is against the interests of Australia and I wish to protest against the signing of it for the following reasons:

There will be restrictions on Australian content rules in new media. Under the Agreement free-to-air commercial radio broadcasting Australian content is capped at 25% and Australian content will be capped at between 55% and 20% on television

The USFTA dispute process limits democracy.

Some existing limits on foreign investment are retained but these limits cannot be increased. The threshold for the Foreign Investment Review Board has been lifted from \$50 million to \$800 million. US investments in new business areas not listed as reservations will not be reviewed at all.

Quarantine and labelling of food products - Australian crops and livestock will be at risk (GE crops and mad cow disease). The US does not insist on the labelling of food.

The Environment – The Agreement commits Australia to encourage the development of “flexible, voluntary and market-based mechanisms for environmental protection. This is definitely not a workable proposition.

Rights to regulate essential services – In Australia some public services are supplied on a commercial basis; e.g., health, education, water, energy etc. The text states that the “services chapter does not apply to public services” but it would seem to apply to all the above which are in competition on a commercial basis.

Higher costs for medicines – Under USFTA drug companies would have exclusive patent rights for new medicines to produce them for 20 years.

Australians must not be subject to the high cost of medicines that is prevalent in the US.

Copyright extension – This will seriously affect libraries and educational institutions as the proposal is to extend copyright from 50 years to 70 years after the death of the author.

Copyright law is supposed to provide a balance between fair rewards for authors and excessive protection which raises prices. The Australian Intellectual Property and Competition Review Committee recommended that copyright not be extended without a public enquiry. The USFTA denies us this public debate.

In conclusion I recommend that this Agreement not be endorsed by Cabinet and not come into force as it is contrary to national interest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ros Stafford', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ros Stafford