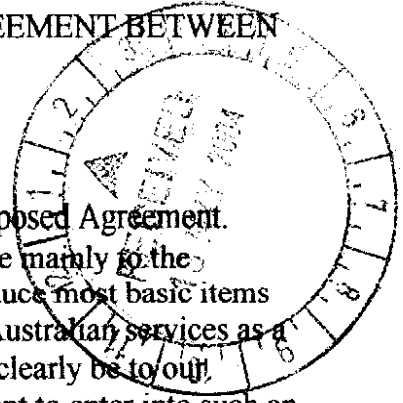


## SUBMISSION ON THE PROPOSED FREE TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND USA



I am extremely concerned about the adverse effects of this proposed Agreement. Realistically speaking, I believe that such an Agreement will be mainly to the advantage of the USA because Australia has the ability to produce most basic items here and therefore the USA will be targeting some important Australian services as a trade-off for our exports. This privatising of our services will clearly be to our **disadvantage**, so it will be wrong for the Australian Government to enter into such an Agreement which seems doomed to chiefly favour the interests of the USA.

Some areas of particular concern:

### Agriculture

As we produce a wide range of foods, as well as sufficient for our population, why would Australia want to import foodstuffs which may have been

- produced under conditions which do not fulfil Australian standards
- irradiated
- genetically modified?

I and many others only wish to buy local produce which conforms to Australian regulations. The spectre of two vessels, loading up similar food products (pork, for example), one in Australia and one in the USA, and then passing each other as they travel across the world, burning valuable energy and adding to the greenhouse gas problem, seems ridiculous, if not seriously wrong.

Australians have enough locally produced, disease-free pork (and many other foodstuffs); we do not need to risk importing disease and other problems just to satisfy large corporations which are seeking more profits at the expense of our own hard-hit farmers.

Let's export our clean, green products to the bigger country, which may require food which they do not have enough of, but we don't need their inferior products here if we produce it already.

### Quarantine

I find it hard to believe reassurances that our quarantine regulations will not be relaxed in favour of USA corporations wishing to thrust their products on to us. Bit by bit they will exact removal of our quarantine regulations and in the end our valuable disease-free status (such as no fire blight) and GM Free status will be gone for ever, and our markets with them.

### Telecommunications

As I mentioned above, the USA will also demand trade-offs for Australia exporting our food to them, and they are clearly targeting Telstra. Surely it is obvious that we must retain our own telecommunications system as a matter of national security, should we come under threat of any kind (even though the USA is an ally - the telco could be on sold to any other operation, in any other part of the world, at some time in the future.) Australia must retain ownership and control of the vital communications network in case of need, and as a deterrent to any who may see us as vulnerable.

### The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

US drug corporations are obviously looking at the PBS as a source of great profit for themselves. I foresee that, if our PBS is taken over by US corporations who think only in terms of relentless profits, affordable medical treatment for ordinary Australians will be gone for ever. No Government, with the wellbeing of its people at heart, would allow the PBS on to the FTA negotiating table and I urge our Government not to do so.

The final point I wish to make is this:

If these "free trade" deals are made in a way that most Australians lose out (a few may benefit), and uncounted full-time Australian jobs are lost, where in future will be enough taxpayers to fund our own country's needs?

If ever a policy was *not* in our country's interests, this Australia/USA Free Trade Agreement (along with its relation the GATS) seems so.

There has to be some means of thinking laterally and devising a Trade Agreement where we, the Australian people, benefit (value adding? niche markets? organic produce? solar power?)

Consult the people, hold brainstorming forums, and find a way to improve our exports without disadvantaging Australia by means of these "free trade agreements" where everyone knows that it is not really a level playing field and yet again our producers and our people will lose out to the bigger players.

*Rosemary Davies*

29 April 2004