

Secretary  
Senate Select Committee on the Free Trade Agreement  
between Australia and the United States of America  
Suite S1.30.1  
The Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
AUSTRALIA

Dear Secretary,

I regret that I have found time only to write this brief letter of concern about the proposed Free Trade Agreement, but I hope that it will allow mine to be counted among the voices of opposition.

I have broad fears about the environmental and social consequences of intense export-oriented growth in Australia and throughout the global economy, and about the effects of diminished democratic control over trade in goods and service.

But what particularly disturbs me about the proposed FTA is the lack of appreciation for the value of democratic control over service provision and resource management. The agreement is grounded in an inflated confidence in the wisdom of profit and efficiency driven directives for economic development. A concern for social equity should be at the centre of national and global trading systems and this can better be achieved by the protection (if not enhancement) of government regulatory mechanisms.

But more puzzling is the manifest willingness to bind communities and their elected leaders to an irreversible commitment which will be unresponsive to future changes in economic and social realities and community opinion about them (leaving aside the issue of whether or not community opinion supports that agreement in the first place!). The Australian government should refuse to subordinate their powers of regulation of trade and related areas to the corporate agenda that I see fuelling the debate over 'free trade'. I am worried that the rigidity of the proposed AUSFTA removes even conscientious future governments' capacity to act responsively to popular opinion and the act in the best interests of Australian communities. I hate to idea of state-to-state challenges to each other's adherence to the Agreement and the protection granted most US investors from scrutiny for the Foreign Investment Review Board.

I apologise for such a disorderly submission. I hope it succeeded in conveying my general concerns.

Yours Sincerely,

Diana Beaumont