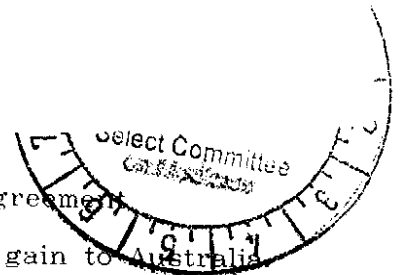


Senate Select Committee on USFTA
Suite S1.30.1, Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Submission

Senate Select Committee on the US - Australia - Free Trade Agreement



The USFTA is ambiguous and undemocratic with little possible gain to Australia. The CIE study commissioned by the government predicted only 0.3% gains for the Australian economy in ten years, and this study assumed the inclusion of sugar. Other studies have shown a loss. Australia's possible gain in export of Australian products is minimal while opening the gates for cheap, subsidised agricultural imports from the US.

The agreement weakens Australia's control over prices of medicines, (US prices are up to ten times higher), over the labelling of foods, corporate regulations, regulations on overseas investments, over child care regulations, quarantine rules (disease control such as with imported pork), and even blood product services.

It may allow US corporations to challenge our environmental laws and contains the extraordinary statement, -"flexible, voluntary and market based mechanisms-" should be the basis for environmental protection.

It removes Australia's rights to ever increase local content quotas on free to air television, reduces Australian jobs in the media and our control over our own culture.

Australia must give US representatives the same rights as Australians in developing Australian standards and technical regulations ie. it gives US interests direct input into making Australian laws or regulations. Our qualifications, licensing and technical standards can be challenged by US.

US investment in Australia must be treated in the same way as local investment opening the way for unrestricted takeovers of Australian companies. US investors cannot be required to use local products.

US companies can claim that Australian laws limit their trading and so can attack Australia's minimum wage. Dispute hearings on this and other matters need not be made public.

Cuts, phasing out and abolition of tariffs on textiles, clothing and motor vehicle parts - industries which employ thousands of workers in regional areas of high unemployment - will mean immediate job losses.

I ask that Australia should not sign the USFTA as it is detrimental to Australia's future and would sign away its autonomy and democratic rights.

Ann Marshall

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