

Senate Select Committee on the
US Free Trade Agreement
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Submission to the Senate Select Committee on the US Free Trade Agreement

I have been following the process of the development of the USFTA over a period of time with some concern.

The following aspects of the USFTA are of concern to me:

1. The economic benefits are unclear.
2. The dispute process is a restriction on the democratic right of governments to regulate in the public interest.
3. Australia cannot afford to sacrifice equity and risk a significant growth in PBS expenditure by curtailing the supply of cheap and effective generic medicines and allowing expensive brand name American drugs to wash through the market with little competition. The Review of Decisions of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, the Joint US – Australia Medicines Working Group and changes to Patent Laws are all elements of the USFTA that could lead to an increase in the price of medication.
4. I do not support the extension of period for which copyright payments must be made, it will mean higher costs for libraries and education bodies.
5. I don't support the lessening of rights to review foreign investment.
6. Australians should have the right to make decisions to regulate essential services based on the public interest, not on commercial principles. Therefore any attempts to lessen our ability to regulate should not be supported. The same applies to our right to make decisions about quarantine and regulation of genetically engineered crops and food, and the environment.
7. It is very important that Australia maintains strong local content quotas in current and future media- we have a unique voice that must be heard. In the USFTA local content quotas are bound, future Australian governments are limited in the laws they can introduce for new media- these proposals are unacceptable. Also we must clearly be able to regulate public broadcasting whether or not SBS advertises- as this is ambiguous under the USFTA.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Herron

