



23 April 2004

The Senate Select Committee on the USFTA
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

SUBMISSION RE AUSTRALIA US FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (USFTA)

I am opposed to the proposed USFTA as I do not believe Australia will obtain the benefits originally promised. The proposed agreement;

- . weakens price controls on medicines by allowing drug companies to seek reviews of decisions by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee,
- . sets up a new joint policy committee which gives the US government a voice in Australian medicines policy based on US trade policy, not on the Australian policy of access to medicines for all,
- . limits Australian content rules for new forms of media, and allows the US government to challenge these rules as a barrier to trade;
- . adopts US copyright law, leading to higher costs for libraries, schools and universities,
- . "binds" or freezes many areas of state and local government regulations at existing levels and limits the ability of governments to make new laws and policies on essential services such as water,
- . limits the powers of the Foreign Investment Review Board to review investment in the national interest, so that 90% of US investment will not be reviewed,
- . sets up joint committees based on US trade policy to give the US government a say in quarantine and regulation of food labelling,
- . outlaws government purchasing policies that give preference to local products or require US contractors to form links with local firms to support local employment, and
- . has a disputes process which enables the US government to challenge many Australian laws and regulations before a trade tribunal on the grounds that they are too burdensome for business or a barrier to trade.

I do not believe the proposed USFTA is in Australia's interest and request that the Senate Select Committee on the USFTA recommend that it not be signed without major alterations to ensure that Australia's interest is served.

Elizabeth Ann Thompson

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