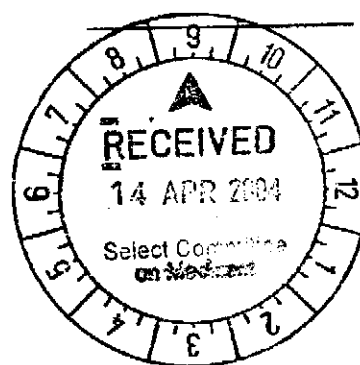




The Secretary,
Senate Select Committee on the US Free Trade Agreement,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission on the United States Free Trade Agreement (USFTA)

From:

Peter Towler & Maria Navarro

We strongly believe the proposed US-Australia Free trade agreement is not in Australia's interests because it:

- 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 regulation at existing levels and limits the ability of governments to make new laws and policies on essential services like 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.

Thank-you for considering our opinion.

14/04/2004