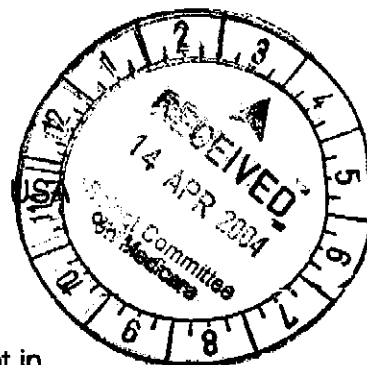


Secretary
Senate Select Committee on the FTA between Australia and the
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



I believe the proposed US-Australia Free Trade Agreement is not in Australia's national interest 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 Australian 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 dispute 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

The rules of the Free Trade Agreement mean that Australian regulations to ensure equitable access to and affordable pricing of goods and services could be challenged by transnational corporations as barriers to free trade. As such they are an attack on our national sovereignty and a denial of the right of a democratic country to determine trade measures which best suit its national interest.

On these grounds I urge the Select Committee to recommend opposition to any enabling legislation required by the Agreement when it is presented to Parliament.

Anne Warren

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