

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:

Soul Purpose Ecology
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As an Australian citizen I am deeply concerned and very much against signing this so-called "free trade" agreement between the Australian and US government, foremost because it legally restricts all future (more truly) democratic involvements of Australian citizens to decide about their own future and change the destructive trends transnational corporations try to set right now. This agreement is a sell-out of the unique wealth and voice of Australian people and of the possibility of more involved future grassroots democracy.

I 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.

I very much hope that the Senate and the Parliament will do what ever it needs to stop this sell out of our future,

Yours sincerely, mOnika G. Gaede