

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you to express my concern regarding the proposed Free Trade Agreement currently under review. This agreement, as it currently stands, is a threat to Australian businesses (particularly small businesses), Australian educational institutions and Australian consumers. I will attempt to explain why briefly;

Business:

I am an IT professional who has worked in telecommunications, military contracting and web-services in Australia for over five years. In every job I have undertaken I have used open-source software extensively or exclusively. This trade agreement, in particular its 'copyright protection; and patent provisions, are a direct affront to the ability of open-source to provide low-cost and unencumbered solutions to small-businesses. For example, four years ago I was part of starting a web-based mortgage business. This was with minimal funding, and if we were not able to use open-source solutions such as Samba (to allow interaction with Microsoft products) our startup costs would have been vastly greater (Samba, an Australian innovation, is threaten by the patent provisions in particular).

Education:

I eventually quit the rat-race, and I am now the systems developer at the visualisation lab at Sydney University. The 'copyright protection; provisions of the FTA would prevent use from modifying, programming and interfacing with the hardware equipment we have legally purchased in any way not approved by the manufacturer. Furthermore, our extensive use of open-source to further our research is threatened by the FTA's provisions to prevent independent developers from inter-operating with third-party products.

Consumers:

As an Australian consumer who prefers to use Linux at home, were the FTA ratified I would be unable to play DVDs on my computer. Simple as that. I purchased the DVD and the player, but the 'copyright protection; provisions would allow the manufacturer of the DVD player to dictate how I am able to use the player, and as they don't support Linux my use of third-party (open-source) tools to watch the DVD would be classed as 'copyright circumvention; and be illegal.

This is just three examples of how this agreement is set-up to favour (primarily US-owned) corporations at the expense of ordinary Australians. I would urge you to oppose this agreement in any way possible and allow the Australian people to retain control of their own property.

With kind regards,
Steve Smith