



**AFTINET**  
Australian Fair Trade  
& Investment Network Ltd

Level 3, Suite 3B, 110 Kippax St  
Surry Hills, NSW, 2010  
Phone: 02 9212 7242  
Fax: 02 9211 1407  
Email: [campaign@aftinet.org.au](mailto:campaign@aftinet.org.au)  
ACN 097 603 131  
ABN 83 659 681 462  
[www.aftinet.org.au](http://www.aftinet.org.au)

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## **Electoral Commitment Needed on Development Trade Policy**

**All major political parties were today urged to commit to an international trade policy that would focus on human rights, labour rights and environmental sustainability. “These are the core issues for genuine development,” said Fair Trade advocate Adam Wolfenden.**

The Australian Fair Trade & Investment Network is concerned that the current push for free trade in both multilateral and bilateral forums is coming at the expense of the environment, human and labour rights.

“Despite our negative experience with the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement, the Howard government and the Labor Opposition continue to support a wide range of FTA talks, especially with China. But none of these talks include consideration of real development and safeguards the rights of people and the environment,” said AFTINET spokesperson Adam Wolfenden.

“The so called Doha ‘development round’ of trade talks in the World Trade Organisation is floundering because of the lopsided burden of concessions demanded of developing countries,” continued Mr Wolfenden.

A 21<sup>st</sup> October Financial Times article described the Doha Round ‘with the rules being written to benefit the rich nations and now also the big developing countries.’

The leaders of India, Brazil, and South Africa recently stated that for the “development’ aspect of the Doha round to eventuate, developed countries need to cut the domestic subsidies and trade barriers in agriculture without making ‘disproportionate demands’ from developing countries in relation to non-agricultural products and services.”

“The same attitude towards development and the environment in the Doha Round can be seen in current bilateral trade policy in Australia,” Mr Wolfenden continued.

“The Howard government has been unrelenting in its approach to signing Free Trade Agreements that have dubious benefits. We’re already seeing the effects that the US/Australia Free Trade Agreement is having on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and other areas like pork farming. Not to mention the lacklustre economic results.

“Whilst we welcome Labor’s commitment to independent research of the benefits and effects of free trade agreements, this has to take a broader perspective than purely financial outcomes. The human, environment and labour costs must be factored in to any trade agreement and we hope that these would be included in benchmarks.”

**For more information contact: Adam Wolfenden, AFTINET Campaigner**  
**Ph: 02 9212 7242 / 0401 045 536**  
**Email: [campaign@aftinet.org.au](mailto:campaign@aftinet.org.au)**