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MEDIA RELEASE

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Thai Australia Free Trade Agreement Process Flawed say Community Groups

"The Thai-Australia Free Trade Agreement is a quick fix deal developed without community consultation and without information about its impact on communities in Australia or Thailand," Dr Patricia Ranald, Principal Policy Officer at the Public Interest Advocacy Centre said today.

Dr Ranald convenes the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network of 87 community organisations concerned about the impact of trade agreements on domestic laws and policies.

"The deal was announced last October, the text was not made available until 6 months later and the Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee on Treaties has yet to consider it," said Dr Ranald. "This is another example of the undemocratic process of trade agreements being negotiated and signed without proper community consultation or parliamentary scrutiny," she said.

"The main impacts of the agreement in Australia will be on the car industry and the textile, clothing and footwear industries, which are large employers in regional areas, yet no studies have been done of the impacts on jobs in these industries or communities. Such research should be done and made public before negotiations begin" explained Dr Ranald.

"Thai community groups, farmers organisations and Senators have made similar complaints about the lack of community consultation," added Dr Ranald.

"We are also concerned at the lack of guarantees in the agreement that labour rights and environmental protections will not be undermined" said Dr Ranald.

Contact Dr Patricia Ranald office hours 02 9299 7833 or after hours 0419 695 841