



AFTINET
Australian Fair Trade
& Investment Network Ltd

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MEDIA ALERT

21/7/03

Rally against the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement Wednesday, July 23, 1pm outside NSW Parliament House, Macquarie St.

Speakers including actor Colin Friels will address a lunchtime rally to oppose the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement outside Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney on Wednesday, July 23.

A Senate Committee Inquiry into the US-Australia FTA will be holding public hearings at Parliament House on July 23.

Committee members including Greens Senator Kerry Nettle and ALP Senator Gavin Marshall will address the lunchtime rally as well as AMWU National Secretary, Doug Cameron and Democrats MLC Arthur Chesterfield-Evans.

Dr Patricia Ranald, of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) said the rally was being organised to support the Senate Inquiry and demand open public debate on the US-Australia FTA.

"These negotiations are being held in secret and the deal is ratified by Cabinet, not by parliament," Dr Ranald said. "The US Government has identified Australian social policies and essential services as 'barriers to trade' and once the FTA is signed it is binding on future Australian Governments," Dr Ranald said.

Social policies being targeted under the FTA include:

- ◆ Local content levels in Australian film, TV and music
- ◆ Price controls of essential medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme
- ◆ Regulation of essential public services such as health, education, water and postal services
- ◆ Labelling of genetically modified (GM) food and regulation of GM crops
- ◆ Control over levels of foreign investment in strategic industries such as the media, Telstra and Qantas

"Social policies which protect the public interest should be publicly debated here and decided by parliament, not negotiated in a trade agreement behind closed doors," Dr Ranald said.

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