



AFTINET Ltd
Level 1, 46-48 York Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Phone: 02 9299 7833
Fax: 02 9299 7855
Email: lsouthalan@piac.asn.au
Website: www.aftinet.org.au
ABN 83 659 681 462
ACN 097 603 131

MEDIA RELEASE

USFTA to bring higher medicine prices despite Minister's promises

"Washington insider reports that the Trade Minister is indeed discussing price rises under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme give the lie to his promises that the price of medicines would not rise under the USFTA," Dr Patricia Ranald, convenor of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network, said today.

"The report in the reliable business trade bulletin *Inside US Trade* says the negotiators are discussing text on possible means of price rises for medicines listed on the PBS. The report interprets this as a signal that Australia is open to changes to allow price rises," explained Dr Ranald.

"Even worse, the same source reports that there would be a "side letter" agreement that only Australia, not the US, would make such changes. The letter would prevent the U.S. from having to change the few accessible medicines programs it has, run by the Veterans Administration, Indian Health Service and the Department of Defense," said Dr Ranald "This is the highest form of US hypocrisy."

"The price of medicines for most Americans is three to ten times higher than in Australia. It is outrageous that our government could agree to higher prices for medicines in Australia while agreeing that similar changes are unacceptable in the few US programs which make medicines more affordable for some Americans," added Dr Ranald.

"The secrecy of the negotiations means that such shabby deals can be hidden in the details and will not be revealed until after the deal is done," explained Dr Ranald.

"We call upon the Minister to reject these proposals, to keep his commitment that the price of medicines will not be negotiated, and to publish the full text of any agreement, with any "side letters" before Australia is committed to it," said Dr Ranald.

Contact Dr Patricia Ranald (w) 02 9299 7833
After hours mobile 0419 695 841