



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

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Let's see full details of USFTA trade-offs says Fair Trade Network

"The government is claiming benefits from its USFTA deal but we do not know the details of what they have traded off until we see the full agreement," warned Dr Patricia Ranald, policy manager at the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Convenor of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network.

"For example, the government says that the price of medicines will not rise but say that they have agreed to some changes to the process of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). We will need to see the full detail to assess whether those changes will affect prices, " explained Dr Ranald

"It appears that the agreement does not give corporations the power to sue governments. This is an important victory for the public interest, " said Dr Ranald.

"Our Fair Trade Network of 83 community organisations has argued from the start of the negotiations that social policies like the PBS which have nothing to do with trade should not be negotiated behind closed doors," added Dr Ranald. "The US wanted many changes to social regulation that would be clearly against the public interest."

"The government kept denying that these policies were on the table but had to admit they were when community organisations exposed the real agenda. We challenge the government to show what tradeoffs they have made right now by publishing the whole agreement for public scrutiny, " Dr Ranald added.

"This experience shows the dangers to democracy of secret trade negotiations when we are not told the details until after the deal is done," Dr Ranald explained. " Cabinet makes the deal, and Parliament only gets to vote on some enabling legislation, not on the whole agreement."

"We call on the government to publish the full text of the FTA now for public debate and subject it to full vote by parliament, not just by Cabinet."

Contact Dr Patricia Ranald office hours 02 9299 7833
After hours mobile 0419 695 841