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MEDIA RELEASE

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Community Organisations representing millions want health, cultural policies out of US Free Trade Agreement

**Media Conference Monday November 24, 2003, 11am
NSW Parliament Media Conference Room**

Actor John Howard, ACTU Vice President Doug Cameron, Catholic Bishop Pat Power and other leaders of community organisations representing millions of Australians will today launch a public statement on the US Free Trade Agreement **at a media Conference at 11 am at NSW Parliament.**

The statement does not oppose increased trade, but calls on the government to exclude health, social, environment and cultural policies from the agreement, and for full parliamentary debate before it is signed. It has been endorsed by 59 community organisations, including the ACTU, the Australian Council of Social Service, the Australian Public Health Association and many church organisations. The statement and full list are attached. Comments from speakers are below.

"We need to tell the USA that we will decide now and in the future what stories will come into our country. If we won't protect our own culture, nobody else will" said John Howard, star of *Sea Change* and *Always Greener*.

"US pharmaceutical companies are still pushing for higher prices for medicines. People who must take medication every day simply cannot afford this," said Peter Trebilco, Acting President, Public Health Association of Australia.

"Low income and disadvantaged Australians will pay the greatest price if the Government reduces its capacity to regulate services like health and water through the FTA," said Megan Mitchell, Director, Australian Council of Social Service.

"Education is not a traded good, and governments should not trade away their rights to ensure that education is accessible to all," said Maree O'Halloran, President of the NSW Teachers' Federation.

"Australian health and social equity policies should not be traded away. Australia needs to guard and preserve its rights as a sovereign nation," said Catholic Bishop Pat Power.

Bishop Pat Power 02 62488082

Megan Mitchell ACOSS 9310 4844

Peter Trebilco Public Health Association 9319 1993

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