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Don't trade off medicines and media for sugar says Fair Trade Network

"The Trade Minister is apparently trading off access to affordable medicines and Australian media content just to get sugar back on the table in the USFTA negotiations," said Dr Patricia Ranald, policy manager at the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Convenor of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network.

"Media reports today imply that Australia has given ground on allowing US companies to legally challenge investment rules, higher prices for generic medicines and Australian content in emerging media like digital television," said Dr Ranald.

"It appears the Minister has fallen for the oldest trick in the book, as the US suddenly removed sugar last week to force further concessions. The Australian negotiating position seems to be going backwards."

"This is completely unacceptable. The danger is that the Minister will cobble together any deal to save face. Because of the secrecy of the negotiations, nasty trade-offs could be hidden in the details and we will not see the full agreement until after the deal is done," warned Dr Ranald. "

"The government kept denying that these policies were on the table but had to admit they were when community organisations exposed the real agenda. Our Fair Trade Network of 83 community organisations has argued from the start of the negotiations that social policies which have nothing to do with trade should not be negotiated behind closed doors," added Dr Ranald.

"We challenge the Minister to keep the public commitments made not to trade off these policies," Dr Ranald added.

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