



AFTINET
Australian Fair Trade
& Investment Network Ltd

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
13/10/04

US threat to affordable medicines must be rejected, say public interest groups

“The US Ambassador’s call for Australia to remove an amendment to the US Free Trade Agreement implementing legislation that protects access to affordable medicines must be rejected,” Dr Patricia Ranald said today. Dr Ranald manages policy at the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and is the convenor of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network of 90 community organizations concerned about the impact of the USFTA on Australian health and social policies.

“The amendment seeks to prevent big drug companies from using bogus legal claims to delay consumers’ access to cheaper generic medicines. The US wants us to adopt their laws on intellectual property, giving far more rights to drug companies than to consumers,” said Dr Ranald.

“The Ambassador’s statement confirms our warnings that the USFTA reduces the ability of Australian governments to make laws and policies in the public interest in areas like access to affordable medicines. Once these issues are in a trade agreement, the US can interfere in our health policies,” explained Dr Ranald

“Both the US and Australian government have until October 30 to finally sign off on the USFTA. The US is threatening not to sign off on the USFTA unless this amendment is removed. The USFTA should be rejected if it threatens our access to affordable medicines,” said Dr Ranald.

“Whatever the final outcome of the elections, the composition of the Senate will not change until July next year, so the government does not have a majority. We call upon the ALP, Greens, Democrats and independents to keep their election pledges to stand by this amendment if the government attempts to change it,” said Dr Ranald.

“Access to affordable medicines should be determined democratically by parliament, not traded off in a trade agreement,” said Dr Ranald.

Contact Dr Patricia Ranald work hours 9299 7833 after hours 0419 695 841