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The Hon Andrew Robb AO, MP
Minister for Trade and Investment
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Robb,

As you know, the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network is a network of community organisations advocating for fair trade based on human rights, labour rights and environmental sustainability.

Our organisations, which together represent millions of Australians, continue to be gravely concerned about the impacts of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement being negotiated between Australia, the US, Japan and nine other countries. The continuing failure to conclude the negotiations, which have now entered their fifth year, indicates that many governments are unable to agree that the TPP is in their national interest. Leaked documents and continued media debate show that the health, social and environmental costs of the TPP could outweigh any trade benefits. The current stand-off between Japan the US over market access, and the failure of the US Congress to pass “fast track” legislation, shows that the most powerful players are dominating the negotiations. There is also mounting concern about the secrecy of the negotiations.

Public health costs of the TPP

Proposals for extended patents on medicines would mean higher prices for new medicines for longer in Australia and would have even more severe impacts in developing countries. Other proposals in the agreement to limit the ability of governments to regulate medicine prices would undermine our Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), increasing costs to government and leading to pressure for higher prices at the chemist. Proposals for restricting government regulation of food, alcohol and tobacco labelling could reduce the policy space to adopt effective public health policies in the future.

A recent [Health Impact Study](#) of the TPP conducted by health academics from seven universities showed that these costs to public health could outweigh any economic benefits for Australia.

The TPP could allow foreign companies to sue Australian governments

Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) allows foreign investors to sue governments in international tribunals if laws or policies can be claimed to “harm” their investment. The Philip Morris tobacco company is currently suing the Australian Government for damages over plain packaging legislation, despite the Australian High Court’s rejection of their compensation claim under Australian law. Attempts to “safeguard” health and environmental legislation from ISDS clauses have not been effective in other agreements, including the US-Peru free trade agreement and the Central American Free Trade Agreement. These same “safeguards” did not prevent the Renco lead mining company from suing the Peruvian government because it required the company to clean up lead pollution, or the Pacific Rim

company from suing the El Salvador government because it refused a mining license for environmental reasons.

The only effective way to ensure governments are not sued over public interest legislation is to reject ISDS clauses in all trade agreements.

The TPP could erode workers' rights and environmental protections

Without enforceable workers' rights and environmental standards, trade liberalisation intensifies competition and leads to a race to the bottom on these standards. Leaked documents show that there is no agreement that labour rights based on International Labour Organisation Conventions, or environmental standards based on United Nations Agreements, will be legally enforceable in the same way as other provisions in the TPP. This is not acceptable.

Increased copyright provisions could mean higher costs and restrict internet use

Proposals to increase copyright payment periods would mean higher costs for libraries, schools, universities and consumers. Other proposals would impose criminal penalties for internet users for acts like temporary storage of copyrighted data, but include no clear safeguards for legitimate use.

The TPP could reduce Australian content in media

Australian content laws for audio-visual media ensure that Australian voices are heard and Australian stories are told, especially for our children. TPP proposals to reduce Australian content would result in erosion of our culture.

In summary, the risks and potential costs of these harmful proposals in the TPP are unacceptable. It is not in Australia's national interest for these public policies to be traded away in secret negotiations.

We call on the government to reject all of these harmful proposals in the TPP, and to release the full text of the agreement for public and Parliamentary scrutiny and debate before any Cabinet decision to endorse it.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Patricia Ranald
Convenor, Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network

This letter has been endorsed by 45 organisations (details on the following page).

This letter is endorsed by the following organisations:

National

Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network
Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
Australian Conservation Foundation
Australian Council of Trade Unions
Public Health Association Australia
Friends of the Earth
Greenpeace
Gene Ethics
Householders' Options to Protect the Environment (HOPE)
Lock the Gate Alliance
MADGE Australia Inc
Catholic Religious Australia
Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace
Columban Mission Institute, Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice
Sisters of Charity
The Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education
The Grail Global Justice Network
APHEDA Union Aid Abroad
AID/WATCH
World Vision Australia
Australian Manufacturing Workers Union
Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
Australian Services Union
Australian Education Union
Finance Sector Union
National Union of Workers
National Tertiary Education Union
United Voice
The Australia Institute
Asian Women at Work
Data Stream Pty Limited
SEARCH Foundation
TPP Australia.org
WACA (Whistleblowers, Activists and Citizens Alliance)

State and regional

Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW Inc
Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW
NSW Retired Teachers Association
NSW Nurses and Midwives Association
State School Teachers' Union of WA
Queensland Conservation
Gecko-Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council Assoc Inc.
Logan and Albert Conservation Association Inc (LACA QLD)
Sutherland Shire Environment Centre
Gladstone Conservation Council Inc
Birds Queensland
Alliance to Save Hinchinbrook Inc