

SUBMISSION 6 – Mr Peter Sainsbury

By Email

Received: Saturday, 4 July 2015

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear members of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties and the Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Committee,

I write to express my concern about some elements of the China Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA).

I do not understand what benefit it can be to Australia, particularly Australian workers, to allow Chinese companies to bring in most of their own workforce for projects over \$150 million. Australia already has an unacceptably high unemployment rate and this will only make it worse. Compounding the problem is that the Chinese workers may not have the same industrial rights and conditions of employment as Australian workers. While I am opposed to Chinese people being brought in to Australia to work on Chinese projects, I am strongly of the opinion that whoever they are people working in Australia should all be guaranteed the same rights. I also understand that if this proposal goes ahead Chinese projects will not be subject to the same environmental conditions and safeguards as Australian (and other) projects. Again I think this is counter to Australian interests. The proposals in ChAFTA are tantamount to sequestering a piece of Australia and subjecting it to laws and conditions that are not Australian. This is ludicrous.

I am also very concerned that Chinese companies may be able sue our government in international tribunals if they can argue that changes to our laws or policies adversely impact on their business. I am opposed to all Investor-State Dispute Settlements that in any way hinder the home nation from enacting laws and regulations that seek to protect and promote its own health, wellbeing, culture, environment, etc. So called “safeguards” intended to protect health, environment and other public welfare measures have not prevented foreign investors from suing over such measures elsewhere, as I am sure you are aware. Nations should sue companies that act to harm them rather than companies suing nations that seek to protect themselves.

In general terms I have nothing against China or Chinese people (although the human rights record of the Chinese government leaves a lot to be desired) but I cannot understand why these agreements are being made. They are contrary to the interests of Australian people, and indeed possibly some Chinese workers who may be exploited while in this country.

The Australian Parliament is being asked to vote for the implementing legislation for this agreement without having the details of what these provisions may mean in the future. This is unacceptable.

Please stop the China FTA by recommending that Parliament vote against the implementing legislation.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sainsbury