

# Inquiry into the Business Experience in Utilising Australia's Free Trade Agreements

Following a referral received from the Minister for Trade and Investment, The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP, the Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth will inquire into and report on the Business Experience in Utilising Australia's Free Trade Agreements.

The Committee invites interested persons and organisations to make a submission addressing the [terms of reference](#). The deadline for submissions is Friday, 26 June 2015

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Trade\\_and\\_Investment\\_Growth/Free\\_Trade\\_Agreements](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Trade_and_Investment_Growth/Free_Trade_Agreements)

## Annotated internet guide

Rowlings, Bill

### **USA boasts of trade gains over Oz**

<http://www.cla.asn.au/News/usa-boasts-of-trade-gains-over-oz/>

*Creating and keeping jobs in the USA is the main reason for the Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement...according to the Office of the President of the United States*

Adamson, David,

### **Australia shouldn't sacrifice food safety standards for free trade** 24 Oct. 2014

<http://www.beefcentral.com/uncategorized/australia-shouldnt-sacrifice-food-safety-standards-for-free-trade/>

Armstrong, Shiro

### **The economic impact of the Australia–United States free trade agreement**

#### **AJRC Working Paper 01/2015**

**January 2015**

<https://crawford.anu.edu.au/pdf/ajrc/wpapers/2015/201501.pdf>

**Abstract:** *The Australia–United States free trade agreement (AUSFTA) came into effect in 2005. It was the second preferential trade agreement that Australia signed, after its agreement with Singapore, and marked a departure from the primacy of Australia's previous trade policy of unilateral and multilateral trade liberalisation towards preferential liberalisation. This paper assesses the economic effects of AUSFTA by applying the Productivity Commission's gravity model of trade from its Bilateral and Regional Trade Agreements review. The evidence reveals AUSFTA resulted in a fall in Australian and US trade with the rest of the world — that the agreement led to trade diversion. Estimates also show that AUSFTA is associated with a reduction in trade between Australia and the United States*

Australian Heroic Sustainability

**Submission on the Possible Australian Participation in a Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement**

[http://dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/tpp/submissions/Documents/tpp\\_sub\\_australian-heroic-sustainability.pdf](http://dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/tpp/submissions/Documents/tpp_sub_australian-heroic-sustainability.pdf)

***Extract: Small businesses thrive in Australia by providing competitive, innovative and sustainable solutions in an increasingly global marketplace.***

*We are concerned that this Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement will hurt small and medium sized Australian Businesses by handing unfair competitive advantages to only the largest multi national corporations. It allows new avenues for the world's largest corporations to unwind social and environmental legislation, reduces Australian SME legal and IP protections as well as removes local support programs that favour developing Australian SME businesses.*

*TPP also facilitates transnationals to continue to pursue questionable single issue agendas such as: suing Australian teenagers for sharing pop songs, banning popular folk medicines that compete with patent pharmaceuticals, removing bulk purchasing schemes to get pensioners a good price on their medicines, and removing barriers to use of controversial Genetic Engineering technologies in the food supply. According to the below report TPP is the complete opposite of the corporate sustainability movement of the last 10 years that has finally started to win back public and SME trust in the way large multinational organisations that operate in Australia.*

**Australian companies under-utilising Free Trade Agreements, HSBC research**

<http://www.about.hsbc.com.au/news-and-media/australian-companies-under-utilising-free-trade-agreements>

Australian businesses under-utilising FTAs due to complexity

*HSBC's research finds that Australian exporters have been slow to take advantage of the business benefits of FTAs. On average each FTA signed by Australia is used only by 19% of Australian exporters, compared to an average of 26% among Asian exporters using their respective markets' FTAs.*

**Australia's trade negotiating strategy fundamentally flawed 23 October 2014 (The Conversation)**

<https://theconversation.com/australias-trade-negotiating-strategy-fundamentally-flawed-32622>

*Ten years on from the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement, Australia is entering another round of negotiations towards the new and controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership. In this [Free Trade Scorecard series](#), we review Australian trade policy over the years and where we stand today on the brink of a number of significant new trade deals.*

**Barns, Greg**

### **Why we should not get too excited at not-so-free trade deals**

From: Mercury November 24, 2014 12:00AM

<http://www.themercury.com.au/news/opinion/talking-point-why-we-should-not-get-too-excited-at-not-so-free-trade-deals/story-fnj4f64i-1227132351362>

**Extract** *There is a notable lack of enthusiasm among economists who support global free trade for the Australia-China Free Trade Agreement. These types of bilateral agreements rarely produce the goods, excuse the pun, and they represent political and lobbyist demands rather than being based on genuine liberalised markets.*

*Furthermore, bilateral and exclusive trade agreements reduce the incentive for global free trade and the losers from this perspective are impoverished countries.*

*Jagdish Bhagwati, one of the world's most eminent trade economists and a Professor at Columbia University in New York, says of bilateral free trade deals: "Trade economists generally agree that preferential trade agreements are a pox on the world trading system." Bhagwati, writing in The New York Times on July 24, 2011, argued: "Bilateral trade agreements are not the same as free trade. Yes, they liberalise trade for the parties involved, but outsiders then face a handicap. The discrimination comes in the form of barriers like tariffs and anti-dumping charges, which countries impose on imports that they believe are priced artificially low."*

*While FTAs have the potential to provide some modest trade benefits, there are also a number of reasons to be wary of pursuing them on economic efficiency grounds.*

*First, an FTA with a trading partner that is not the lowest cost producer risks creating 'trade diversion' - effectively a situation whereby the importing country shifts its buying from a more efficient, lower cost country whose goods are subject to a tariff towards the less efficient and higher cost FTA partner whose goods are not subject to a tariff.*

*In such circumstances, the importing country loses the tariff revenue, whilst its consumers do not fully benefit from a price reduction, potentially making them worse-off*

### **Bilateral and regional trade agreements (Productivity Commission)**

Submissions

<http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/trade-agreements/submissions>

**Blustein, Paul**

#### **Globalization, economic interdependence and new trade agreements.**

*With great power comes great responsibility – 100 years after WWI – Pathways to a secure Asia. Section III.*

[http://www.swp-](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/projekt_papiere/BCAS2014_Paul_Blustein.pdf)

[berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/projekt\\_papiere/BCAS2014\\_Paul\\_Blustein.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/projekt_papiere/BCAS2014_Paul_Blustein.pdf)

**See second paragraph on page 4**, for anecdotal evidence that with the exception of sheep meat, Australian businesses did not appear to gain any benefit from the Australia-US free trade agreement. Notes that the situation is now very different from the days when major market impediments existed. Calls the recent spate of agreements Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs rather than FTAs) - Weakens WTO.- There is a different case for the TPP, but mainly geopolitical – Questions the validity of this claim - Compiler

**A decade on, is the Australia-US FTA fit for the 21st century?** 22 October 2014 (The Conversation)

<http://theconversation.com/a-decade-on-is-the-australia-us-fta-fit-for-the-21st-century-33016>

Edwards, Len

**Trade Mega Deals and the WTO**

<https://www.gowlings.com/KnowledgeCentre/article.asp?pubID=3764>

Electronic Frontier Foundation

**Speak Out Against the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement**

<https://act.eff.org/action/speak-out-against-the-trans-pacific-partnership-agreement>

*A gross inequity for Australian businesses and consumers is the plan to export the worst aspects of Australian copyright law to other TPP countries, while certain protections such as fair dealing will be retained under US law.*

**Fighting FTAs, Educating for Action: The Challenges of Building Resistance to Bilateral Free Trade Agreements**

<http://globaljusticeecology.org/files/10JAPSSChoudry-1.pdf>

**Abstract:** *Considerable scholarly research (e.g. Starr, 2000; Goodman, 2002; McNally, 2002; Polet and CETRI, 2004; Bandy and Smith, 2005; Day, 2005) has gone into examining the “anti-globalization”, or “global justice” movement, including campaigns against the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the WTO, NAFTA and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Yet relatively little attention has been paid to newer movements against bilateral free trade and investment agreements (FTAs). Drawing from the author’s extensive engagement in struggles against FTAs, this article critically discusses the spread of bilateral free trade and investment agreements in the wake of the breakdown of multilateral (WTO) and regional (e.g. FTAA) negotiations, and the rise in social movement activism against these agreements. Drawing on examples from the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, this article dispels the assumption that bilateral free trade and investment agreements are less of a threat than multilateral agreements.*

Grenville, Stephen

**Will the Trans-Pacific Partnership be a good deal for Australia?** 4 March 2015 (Business Spectator)

<http://www.businessspectator.com.au/article/2015/3/4/global-news/will-trans-pacific-partnership-be-good-deal-australia>

*Extract: The Trans-Pacific Partnership is close to the make-or-break stage. It will either get US Congressional blessing soon or lose momentum and slip from the agenda. So it is*

*surprising how little public debate there is in Australia about its important ramifications. For an excellent exception, [see Peter Martin](#).*

*How did Australia go from being a leading exponent of multilateral trade to being ready to sign a preferential trade arrangement universally acknowledged to be inferior to the WTO's multilateral model?*

*The short answer is that the global trading environment has shifted. The WTO is in stasis. The only path forward seems to be either multilateral agreements with very limited subject coverage ([like the Bali agreement](#)), or 'coalitions of the willing' -- agreements between a smaller number of countries who are often regional partners. And then there are bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) such as the ones Australia has [recently signed](#) with China and with Japan. These contradict the multilateral spirit of the WTO. Exporters are happy to get access to a new market, but FTAs may divert imports from the cheapest foreign supplier by giving preference to the FTA partner. Certainly the plethora of bilateral FTAs is a [sub-optimal outcome](#).*

Jooste, James

**Australia will have to compete with America and New Zealand under the Trans Pacific Partnership for a better dairy deal with Japan / James Jooste**

**Vic Country Hour**

By [James Jooste](#)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-15/trans-pacific-dairy/6394290>

Keane, Bernard

**Beware of what lurks beneath free trade agreements** 14 Nov. 2011

<http://www.crikey.com.au/2011/11/14/beware-of-what-lurks-beneath-free-trade-agreements/>

Law Council of Australia

**Review of bilateral and regional trade agreements**

<http://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/lawcouncil/images/LCA-PDF/docs-2200-2299/2258%20Review%20of%20bilateral%20and%20regional%20trade%20agreements.pdf>

Martin, Peter

**Australian Businesses neither use nor know about free trade agreements**

27 March, 2015 (Sydney Morning Herald)

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/world-business/australian-businesses-neither-use-nor-know-about-trade-agreements-20150326-1m8o5s.html>

Extract: *The annual Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry trade survey shows the least understood free trade agreement is the Korea-Australia FTA, followed by the Australia-Chile FTA. The most understood agreements are the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA*

*(understood by 18 per cent of those surveyed) and the Australia-United States one (understood by 17 per cent).*

*The results have dropped by about 7 percentage points since the 2014 survey, suggesting fewer Australian businesses understand the agreements than previously.*

*The draft Trans Pacific Partnership contains more than 20 chapters, each with annexes.*

*"The majority of responses across each firm size stated 'I don't understand it at all and don't use it' with regard to all listed FTAs," the report says. .*

Mathews, John

**Trans-Pacific Partnership threatens a green trade deal 22 October 2014 (The Conversation)**

<https://theconversation.com/trans-pacific-partnership-threatens-a-green-trade-deal-32957>

*The Trans-Pacific Partnership threatens a green trade deal that could ultimately do more to reduce carbon emissions than international climate agreements such as the failed [Kyoto Protocol](#). Australia is party to an important initiative at Geneva to develop an "[Environmental Goods Agreement](#)" designed to be adopted as a multi-country trade agreement by the World Trade Organisation. This would build on a [2012 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation agreement](#) to reduce tariffs on green goods to less than 5% by 2015*

Merkely, Jeff

**Sen. Merkley Explains Exactly Why TPP is a Disaster - May 24, 2015**

<https://www.ringoffireradio.com/2015/05/sen-merkley-explains-exactly-why-tpp-is-a-disaster/>

*Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) laid out just exactly why the TPP would be a disaster for American workers during a speech on the Senate floor, [the Huffington Post reported](#).*

*"We are creating a structure of a group of seven very poor nations with very low wages, five affluent nations with higher wages, and think about the difference between running an operation on the mound or Malaysia or Mexico, with a minimum wage of less than \$2 an hour, and in Vietnam with a minimum wage of 60 to 70 cents depending on what part of the country you're in," Merkley said. "Think about the difference between that and the minimum wage in the United States. It is a 10-to-1 differential."*

**A Multinational Trojan Horse: The Trans-Pacific Partnership / Dave Pruett – Huffington Post 7 May 2005**

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-pruett/a-multinational-trojan-ho\\_b\\_7216416.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-pruett/a-multinational-trojan-ho_b_7216416.html)

**Multilateral, regional, bilateral: which agreement is best? 15 November 2013 ('The Conversation)**

<http://theconversation.com/multilateral-regional-bilateral-which-agreement-is-best-19664>

### **The noodle bowl: Why trade agreements are all the rage in Asia**

<http://www.economist.com/node/14384384>

**Extract:** *But economists caution that the proliferation of FTAs is unlikely to do wonders for the region's trade. Aaditya Mattoo, of the World Bank, points out that because trade barriers in Asia are already relatively low, the benefit of a small further reduction in barriers in one market is tiny.*

*Bilateral deals come laden with complicated rules about where products originate—rules which impose substantial costs of labelling and certification on firms. The more overlapping deals there are, the more complex the rules and the higher the costs. Those who follow Asia's FTA mania refer to this as the “noodle bowl”. No wonder few firms actually want to use FTAs. An ADB survey of exporters in Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand in 2007-08 found that only 22% took advantage of them. Certainly, the huge rise in trade deals seems to have done nothing to boost the share of the continent's trade that is intra-Asian (see chart).*

Oxley, Alan

**Free Trade Agreements in the era of globalization new instruments to advance new interests the case of Australia / Alan Oxley** Chairman, Australian APEC Study Centre at Monash University

<http://www.apec.org.au/docs/oxley2002d.pdf>

*Presents the case for regional agreements.*

Palombi, Luigi

**It's time to fix the free trade bungle on the cost of medicines (18/12/2014)**

<http://johnmenadue.com/blog/?p=2937>

*Extract: Ten years on from the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement, Australia is entering another round of negotiations towards the new and controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership.*

*In this [Free Trade Scorecard](#) series, we review Australian trade policy over the years and where we stand today on the brink of a number of significant new trade deals.*

*Negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership present an opportunity to correct a mistake made a decade in the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement, which led to Australia paying higher prices for pharmaceuticals.*

Productivity Commission

**Bilateral and Regional Trade Agreements / Productivity Commission Nov 2010**

[http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/104203/trade-agreements-report.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/104203/trade-agreements-report.pdf)

Public Citizen

**Buy American Would Be Gutted under the Trans-Pacific Partnership: Unraveling the Spin from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative**



<http://www.citizen.org/documents/TPP-Buy-American-USTR-retort.pdf>

***Buy American would be gutted, and American jobs lost, under proposed TPP rules requiring "national treatment" in government procurement.***<sup>4</sup> *The 121 members of Congress carefully spotlighted this problem in their letter: "We have seen that Buy American requirements have had a strong impact in creating good middle class jobs here in the United States...Any prospective TPP agreement must not provide firms operating in the other TPP nations "national treatment" access to U.S. government procurement, since doing so would undermine the standards that Congress has set to support a strong domestic manufacturing sector."* **Note:** same would apply to Australia.

Quiggin, John

**Economic Evaluation of the Proposed Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the United States 2004**

Schools of Economics and Political Science, University of Queensland

[http://www.uq.edu.au/rsmg/WP/Australian\\_Public\\_Policy/WPP04\\_2.pdf](http://www.uq.edu.au/rsmg/WP/Australian_Public_Policy/WPP04_2.pdf)

Ranald, Pat

**The experience of the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement: lessons for the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement negotiations** Paper presented at the Stakeholders Forum, seventh round of Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, June 19, 2011, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

<http://aftinet.org.au/cms/sites/default/files/pranald%20forum190611.pdf>

*Summary: This paper examines the experience of the US Australia free trade agreement (AUSFTA) negotiated in 2004, and how that experience and the outcomes of the agreement have influenced the debate on the transpacific partnership agreement (TPPA), and the trade policy recently announced by the Australian government. It discusses the implications for the TPP of the Australian experience and the Australian policy on investor state dispute settlement, medicines pricing policy, and intellectual property rights. It is an updated version of some of the material in the author's chapter "The politics of the TPPA in Australia" in **No ordinary deal: unmasking the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement**, edited by Jane Kelsey, Alan and Unwin, 2010.*

**Submission to the Productivity Commission Study of Bilateral and Regional Trade Agreements** / Business Council of Australia

<http://www.bca.com.au/publications/submission-to-the-productivity-commission-study-of-bilateral-and-regional-trade-agreements>

**Should Australia continue negotiating bilateral free trade agreements** / Bryan Mercurio

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/UNSWLJ/2004/37.html>



Symon, Andrew

**Australia's New Trade Agreements: Beneficial Liberalisation or Harmful Policy?**

November 2005

South Australian Centre for Economic Studies

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/saces/publications/papers/issues/SACESEIP16TradeAgreements.pdf>

Thurbon, Elizabeth

**Australia's procurement policy leaves our exporters behind** Elizabeth Thurbon (The Conversation) 17 October 2014

<https://theconversation.com/australias-procurement-policy-leaves-our-exporters-behind-32569>

Tienhaara, Kyla

**Investor-state dispute settlement in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, 19 May 2010 (Regulatory Institutions Network, Australian National University)**

[https://www.dfat.gov.au/fta/tpp/subs/tpp\\_sub\\_tienhaara\\_100519.pdf](https://www.dfat.gov.au/fta/tpp/subs/tpp_sub_tienhaara_100519.pdf)

**Summary of recommendations**

*"This submission outlines serious problems with both the process of investor-state dispute settlement and the handling of important issues of public policy by investment arbitration tribunals. The key recommendations are that the government should:*

- *strongly oppose the inclusion of investor-state dispute settlement in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement*
- *not sign any agreements that contain an investor-state dispute settlement clause*

*This public submission looks at some of the serious failings of the current system of international investment arbitration. It also draws on the experience of Canada, which has been exposed to claims by American investors under the investment chapter of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for the last fifteen years, to illustrate how an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism in the TPP could negatively affect public policy in Australia. A particular focus is given to NAFTA investor-state disputes concerning regulation aimed at the protection of the environment."*

Tienhaara, Kyla

**Preserving the right to regulate in the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement and beyond.**

25 April 2011

*Extract: When considering such provisions, governments in the region should carefully read a report on Bilateral and Regional Trade Agreements released by the Australian Productivity Commission (PC) in November of last year. The findings are unequivocal: the PC sees no economic justification for including provisions on ISDS in trade agreements, pointing to a lack of evidence that such provisions influence flows of foreign direct investment. The PC additionally argues that 'Experience in other countries demonstrates that there are considerable policy and financial risks arising from ISDS provisions.'*

Read more: <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/04/25/preserving-the-right-to-regulate-in-the-trans-pacific-partnership-agreement-and-beyond/>

### **Trans-Pacific trade talks resume in US Updated 18 January 2012**

<http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/onairhighlights/transpacific-trade-talks-resume-in-us>

*Extract: most of the other countries that are participating have particular agendas for wanting to try to do a trans-Pacific agreement. MOTTRAM: Professor Capling says the ambitions are different to those applying to traditional free trade agreements and that's key. For example, there's the major objective of loosening up arrangements for small and medium-sized businesses.*

*CAPLING: What's coming through from a lot of the feedback in relation to a lot of trade agreements is that small to medium sized enterprises are having problems leveraging the benefits of trade agreements. So to take explicit notice of that is an interesting development.*

### **Understanding small-firm reactions to free trade agreements: Qualitative evidence from New Zealand**

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/JSBED-10-2013-0151>

### **US TPP Report shows zero Australian economic growth**

<http://aftinet.org.au/cms/US%20TPP%20report%20shows%20zero%20Australian%20growth>

*A table on p. 21 shows the TPP would result in a GDP change of 0.00 percent for Australia, Canada, Chile, Peru, Singapore, and the United States after 10 years. For Japan, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Mexico, the projected gain is tiny— 0.01 or 0.02 percentage points. Vietnam is projected to get the biggest GDP boost at a mere one tenth of one percent.*

US Department of Agriculture

### **Agriculture in the Trans-Pacific Partnership /**

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1692509/err176.pdf>

*See p. 21 for estimate that Australia will derive zero benefits in the near to medium term.*

Verrender, Ian

### **We signed some trade agreements? Big deal / Ian Verrender 14 April 2014**

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-14/verrender-we-signed-some-trade-agreements-big-deal/5387234>

*Extract: It was cheers all around last week, but perhaps it's time to acknowledge that one-on-one trade agreements such as we've just signed are largely ineffectual, writes Ian Verrender. Perhaps it's time to put that cork back in the champagne bottle.*

*Amid the backslapping and bonhomie following our recent coups on the free trade front last week, a touch of sanity was injected into proceedings from some rather unexpected quarters. First up, the normally conservative Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry [denounced the South Korea pact](#) as unworkable the day before it was inked.*

Xenophon, Nick

### **Why Australia should be 'hard headed' about bilateral free trade deals**

SEP 22, 2014 |

<http://www.nickxenophon.com.au/blog/why-australia-should-be-hard-headed-about-bilateral-free-trade-deals/>

*Extract: There is little evidence that the latest deals with South Korea and Japan, nor the raft of previous FTAs ratified in the past decade, significantly improve Australia's terms of trade, economy or our overall wellbeing. Cheaper consumer goods for households eventually emerge, but at a huge cost to our manufacturing base, our natural trading strengths in agriculture and services, and our overall trade performance.*

*In short: our FTAs tend to favour our trading partners more than us here at home.*

*I've been heartened to hear increasing calls from experts in Australia for us to become more "hard-headed" about these deals. But we have our work cut out. The Abbott Government is stepping up involvement in these agreements, pursuing deals with China and Pacific-rim countries in secret negotiations with no independent analysis of the trade-offs and costs involved.*

### **What is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)? What we know so far and implications for Australian Consumers and Industries**

<http://www.ecolarge.com/what-is-the-trans-pacific-partnership/>

Van Olsen, Leith

### **Why Abbott should dump Free Trade Agreements**

Updated 8 Oct 2013, 11:30am Tue 8 Oct 2013, 11:30am

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-10-08/vanonselen-why-abbott-should-dump-ftas/5008478>

**Extract: *Tony Abbott wants to revive free trade agreements with some of Australia's most important trading partners, including China. Sounds good, right? Maybe not, argues Leith Van Onselen.***

*So it's official. As [reported](#) by Houses & Holes earlier this morning, the new federal government "has backed fast, practical trade deals with individual countries, including China, in an apparent shift away from the last government's efforts to win comprehensive international agreements". The move towards so-called 'free trade agreements' (FTAs) – essentially binding bilateral pacts between countries that provide preferential access to each other's markets (eg lower tariffs) – aligns the new government with the former Howard Government, which negotiated bilateral trade deals with Thailand, Singapore, and the United States in the early-to-mid 2000s.*

Warren, Elizabeth

**ISDS: The Trans-Pacific Partnership clause that everyone should be against** – 27 February, 2013 (Sydney Morning Herald)

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/comment-and-analysis/isds-the-transpacific-partnership-clause-that-everyone-should-be-against-20150226-13q9vy.html>

*Extract: One strong hint is buried in the fine print of the closely guarded draft. The provision, an increasingly common feature of trade agreements, is called "Investor-State Dispute Settlement," or ISDS. The name may sound mild, but don't be fooled. Agreeing to ISDS in this enormous new treaty would tilt the playing field in the United States further in favour of big multinational corporations. Worse, it would undermine US sovereignty.*

Zeese, Kevin

**Rigged Corporate Trade Agreement: The Truth Concerning the Trans-Pacific Partnership TPP Senator sessions takes a bold step**

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/rigged-corporate-trade-agreement-the-truth-concerning-the-trans-pacific-partnership-tpp/5450130>

*Congress has the responsibility to ensure that any international trade agreement entered into by the United States must serve the national interest, not merely the interests of those crafting the proposal in secret,' Sessions' team writes in a document that lays out the top five concerns with the Obama trade deal. 'It must improve the quality of life, the earnings, and the per-capita wealth of everyday working Americans. The sustained long-term loss of middle class jobs and incomes should compel all lawmakers to apply added scrutiny to a 'fast-track' procedure wherein Congress would yield its legislative powers and allow the White House to implement one of largest global financial agreements in our history—comprising at least 12 nations and nearly 40 percent of the world's GDP.' . . .*

*"The Sessions document then goes point-by-point for five full pages through the TPA trade deal, laying out why it wouldn't help Americans—rather, it would likely hurt American workers—and why the deal doesn't in fact provide Congress with more power over trade despite talking points from the Obama trade deal's proponents*