

Secretary
Senate Select Committee on the Free Trade Agreement

1) The FTA appears to be biased with Australian tariffs removed the instant the FTA becomes law. While US above quota tariffs to be phased out over an 18 year, yes 18 year period! Also quotas to be increased by only ~2%. So the US retains quotas on Australian imports and phases out the tariffs over 18 years, but Australia lets the US have instant open slather access to our markets! When this has been mentioned in conversation most Australians I have talked to are shocked, and believe that the government is not acting in our best interests.

2) The PBS system as it stands works. The FTA changes has the capacity to destabilise the PBS, which is what the US drug companies will be attempting when their new found powers. They wish to fast-track new unproven drugs to the Australian markets. They also wish to charge higher amounts for drugs that don't work as well, or work the same, as cheaper drugs. The costs, of course, to be carried by the Australian tax payer.

3) The US DCMA (Digital Copyright Millennium Act) and the Australian Trade Practices Act are in conflict. What though has gone into how conflicts of this nature are to be resolved? Which law has precedence? If the US law has precedence then the FTA should be dubbed the UnFTA. e.g. DVD region codes are a method of allowing price disparity to exist between regions. The TPA allows DVD player to be made region free so that Australian consumers can buy DVDs from any market they choose. However the DCMA will prevent this practice and making a region free player is circumventing a protection mechanism.

4) Look to the experiences of the Canadian FTA to see that it has not been the pot of gold expected by Canadian enterprises. Actually the general population has only noticed the higher prices on items now imported from the US and the rise of unemployment as US imports has forced Canadian workers to be retrenched. Canadian farmers are worse off after the FTA and they are very vocal in telling that to anybody who will listen.

I should point out that the FTA does have some good parts, however I believe that the negative points are so important that the FTA should not be accepted in its current form. If it cannot be re-negotiated then it should be scrapped. To accept it as-is will have long term ramifications for the Australian economy, and any politician who was involved with its acceptance.

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