



**AFTINET**  
Australian Fair Trade  
& Investment Network Ltd

Level 7, 321 Pitt Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Phone: 02 9699 3686  
Email: [campaign@aftinet.org.au](mailto:campaign@aftinet.org.au)  
ACN 097 603 131  
ABN 83 659 681 462  
[www.aftinet.org.au](http://www.aftinet.org.au)

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**February 19, 2019**

***Community groups say no mandate for RCEP corporate rights agenda as secret trade deal talks resume***

“Secret talks for a mega-trade deal between Australia and 15 Asia-Pacific countries that will cover half the world’s population will resume this week in Bali. While global corporations dominate the agenda, civil society groups and parliaments have been [marginalized](#). The public and parliament will not see the text until after the deal has been signed,” AFTINET Convener Dr Patricia Ranald said today.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) talks include India, China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and the 10 ASEAN countries, began in 2012 and are aiming to finish by the end of 2019.

“Leaked documents have revealed that the RCEP has an agenda for increasing global corporate rights at the expense of peoples’ rights,” said Dr Ranald. “With an election looming, the Australian government has no mandate for this agenda. The agenda includes:

- [special rights for global corporations to bypass national courts and sue governments](#) for millions of dollars in unfair international tribunals if they can argue that a change in law or policy would harm their investment, known as ISDS.
- stronger monopoly rights for pharmaceutical companies to charge [higher prices for medicines](#), which would delay the availability of cheaper versions of those medicines; and
- increased numbers of [temporary migrant workers, who are vulnerable to exploitation](#), as shown by recent research and media reports, without testing if local workers are available.

“The government should not agree to these proposals. Labor adopted policy at its [national conference](#) and in a [draft Bill](#) that rejects them. We call on both the Government and the Opposition to reject such proposals and support instead fairer trade deals based on human rights, labour rights and environmental standards,” said Dr Ranald.

**Contact Dr Patricia Ranald on 0419 695 841**