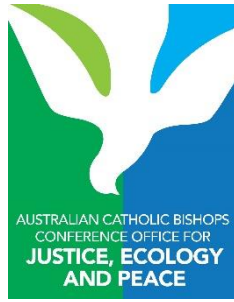




AFTINET
Australian Fair Trade
& Investment Network



MEDIA RELEASE

8 September 2021

Community organisations welcome Trade Minister’s support to waive monopolies on COVID-19 vaccines, urge more action at meetings in India and WTO

Representatives of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET), the Australian Catholic Bishops Office of Justice, Ecology and Peace, Oxfam Australia and the Public Health Association of Australia met yesterday with Trade Minister Tehan. They were amongst 15 national organisations representing millions of Australians who [wrote](#) to him about vaccine patents. They urged him to do more to speed up negotiations on the temporary waiver of monopoly trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPS) for COVID-19 vaccines and treatments in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), moved by India and South Africa, and supported by over 100 WTO member states. This would enable developing countries to manufacture vaccines and increase global supply.

Australia has previously supported the negotiations, but [not expressed direct public support](#) for the waiver.

The organisations welcomed the Minister’s support for the waiver expressed in the meeting, but urge the government to take a stronger public position, including expressing support for the waiver during the visit of Foreign Minister Senator Marise Payne to India on Saturday September 11, and at the next meeting of the WTO TRIPS meeting on September 14.

“We welcome the Minister’s support for the waiver because we need urgent action to end monopoly controls of COVID vaccines. Rich countries are first in line to negotiate with companies, but even [Australia](#) has experienced delays in supply. Most low-income countries will not have access to vaccines until [2023 or later](#). Millions are dying as new variants like Delta develop and spread, prolonging the pandemic,” said Dr Patricia Randal, AFTINET Convener.

Associate Professor Deborah Gleeson said: “The Public Health Association of Australia welcomes the Minister’s support for the TRIPS Waiver, which is critically important for ramping up the global supply of COVID-19 vaccines and other products. But words must be matched by actions at the WTO. We look forward to hearing that Australia is unequivocally supporting the waiver and encouraging other countries to do the same. Failing to secure a waiver puts the whole world’s progress in overcoming the pandemic at risk.”

Dr Sandie Cornish from the Catholic Bishops Office of Justice, Ecology and Peace said: “In the face of a global health emergency, we should be guided by the values of equal respect for people, the reduction of suffering, and fairness in the distribution of benefits and burdens. In an international pharmaceutical market where a small number of firms have market power, governments have a moral responsibility to intervene to ensure just access to vaccines for all.”

Rod Goodburn from Oxfam Australia said: “The encouraging signs of support from the Minister for the TRIPS waiver are most welcome. Pharmaceutical companies are paying out billions in dividends to their shareholders at a time when low-income countries are struggling to get vaccines for their

people. With urgent action by governments at the WTO, the cost of vaccinating the world against COVID-19 could be made at least five times cheaper and we could end pharmaceutical companies' profiteering from their monopolies on COVID vaccines.”

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