



Trade Justice Bulletin

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Inside this edition:

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Campaign update: Leaked proposal on WTO COVID-19 monopolies will not meet need for equitable global access to vaccines and treatments](#)
3. [Community organisations call on Australian government to support stronger waiver on COVID19 monopolies](#)
4. [Free trade deal with UK must be improved before ratification, AFTINET tells parliament](#)
5. [Consultations on trade deal with United Arab Emirates \(UAE\): submissions due 30 April](#)
6. [Big Tech tries to spook Parliament away from anti-trolling regulations, citing free trade agreements](#)
7. [AFTINET in the news](#)

1. Introduction

Dear Members,

This month, a leaked document from **World Trade Organisation (WTO)** members revealed a watered-down proposal for a waiver on COVID19 vaccine monopolies. The proposal is a baby-step forward, but will not meet the need for equitable access to vaccines and other COVID products. The good news is that we still have time to improve the waiver and achieve an effective solution to vaccine inequity – not a cop-out.

This month you can also learn more about our concerns on the **Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement**, and you can also read how to have your voice heard in consultations about a proposed trade deal with the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.

Earlier this year, you may have seen a membership renewal notice arrive in your inbox. If you haven't already renewed for 2022, why not [renew your membership](#) today, make a [donation](#), or [buy](#) a unique AFTINET 20th Anniversary cloth banner/T-Towel with Wilcox and Tandberg cartoons.

All the best,

The AFTINET Team.

2. Campaign update: Leaked proposal on WTO COVID-19 monopolies will not meet need for equitable global access to vaccines and treatments

After 18 months of talks, a leaked document proposing a deal between the **United States**, the **European Union**, **South Africa** and **India** that claims to increase access to COVID-19 vaccines for developing countries reveals some positive steps. The document has not been publicly endorsed by South Africa and India, who are the original sponsors of a more comprehensive waiver.

Much more is needed to address the inequity resulting in only 4% of people in low-income countries having had two vaccine doses, and even less access to new treatments – and the [experts agree](#) .

Here's why the leaked proposal will fail to secure global #VaccineEquity:

- ✗ It is limited to vaccines, not tests and treatments
- ✗ It only includes patents, not all other forms of intellectual property
- ✗ It excludes many countries, including potentially a large number of developing countries

Here's what our Convenor, **Dr. Patricia Ranald**, told [The Guardian](#) and [The New Daily](#):

"We welcome the admission that WTO rules need to change. But these are baby steps which still protect the interests of pharmaceutical companies rather than saving lives. Three million have died since Omicron variant, and millions more will die unless the Australian and other governments insist on a full waiver for vaccines, tests and treatments."

[Read our media release](#)

3. Community organisations call on Australian government to support stronger waiver on COVID19 monopolies

Together with thirteen allied organisations, we sent a letter to the Minister for Trade, **Dan Tehan**, criticising the leaked document and calling on the government to support a stronger waiver on COVID19 monopolies at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

"In our view the document is a small step forward, in the sense that it acknowledges that some WTO patent rules need to change. However, we do not believe it will address the inequity resulting in only 4% of people in low-income countries having had two vaccine doses, and even less access to treatments and tests."

We also recommended a set of practical improvements that would secure a stronger waiver on COVID19 monopolies, including that the waiver apply to all products needed to prevent, treat, and contain COVID-19, that the waiver cover all forms of intellectual property, and that all WTO member countries can use the waiver.

[Read our letter](#)

4. Free trade deal with UK must be improved before ratification, AFTINET tells parliament

In a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties inquiry, we identified the major flaws in the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement, and we also called for major improvements before the deal is ratified.

The inquiry will continue after the election, so our recommendations will go to whichever government wins office. Some of our key recommendations are:

-  Commission an independent assessment of economic and social impacts
-  Ensure that the exclusion of ISDS from the A-UKFTA also applies if the UK joins the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership regional agreement
-  Make labour rights and environmental standards fully enforceable
-  Remove commitments on trade in services and government procurement that could undermine future government public interest regulation
-  Remove proposals for additional temporary workers who are vulnerable to exploitation

In our submission, we draw attention to the lack of transparency and democratic accountability in the negotiation process, and we raise the alarm on the deal's potential impacts on human rights, labour rights and environmental sustainability.

[Read our submission](#)

5. Consultations on trade deal with United Arab Emirates (UAE): submissions due 30 April

Following a [joint-statement](#) between the Australian and UAE trade ministers on their intent to pursue a trade deal, DFAT is now accepting submissions from the public about the potential agreement before formal negotiations begin.

AFTINET member organisations are encouraged to lodge their own [submission](#) to the inquiry before **April 30**.

[Read more](#)

6. Big Tech tries to spook Parliament away from anti-trolling regulations, citing free trade agreements

Representatives of Big Tech companies like **Meta**, **YouTube** and **Twitter** have lobbied parliament to water down regulations which aim to target online trolling and bullying, arguing that the regulations would be in conflict with the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement and free trade deals signed with other countries.

During a Senate [inquiry](#) into the *Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill 2022 [Provisions]*, Big Tech companies claimed that the bill is "not consistent with the spirit of the requirement of the US free trade agreement" because it would require social media companies to maintain a local presence in Australia. This local presence requirement would ensure that user data can be accessed in the case of bullying, trolling or defamation.

[Learn more](#)

7. AFTINET in the news

- [Global powers inch closer to agreement to waive Covid vaccine patents](#), The Guardian
- [Australia urged to step up as aid groups slam 'flawed' COVID-19 vaccine deal](#), The New Daily
- [Australia urged to back full IP waiver for Covid-19 tests and treatments](#), InnovationAus
- [Riches for Australian miner equals misery for Thai villagers](#), Tim Ginty, AFTINET Trade Justice Coordinator in Michael West Media
- [Interview with Dr Patricia Ranald on the India-Australia free trade deal](#), ABC Radio National Drive