



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Australia urged to oppose new TRIPS proposal

Public health, human rights, fair-trade and labour rights campaigners are calling on Trade Minister Dan Tehan to oppose the most recent patent waiver proposal at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) TRIPS Council meeting on May 6.

The more recent waiver that's been circulated at the request of the WTO's Director General is a far cry from the original TRIPS waiver proposed back in 2020 by India and South Africa, and supported by over 100 member states, including Australia.

Several countries, including the UK and Germany, blocked these earlier initiatives to allow others to manufacture and distribute Covid-19 vaccines and other essential treatments and diagnostics. This has fueled the gross inequality we continue to see in Covid-19 vaccination rates between countries.

The new waiver, which originated from discussions between the so-called 'Quad' countries of the US, EU, India and South Africa, despite the Director General's assurances, does not have wide support, with only the EU publicly stating its support since it was leaked earlier this year.

The new proposal is limited to vaccines only and excludes vitally needed medicines and diagnostic tests for at least six months. Moreover, it is restricted to only "eligible countries", which leaves out key populations, and it includes requirements that go beyond what is required by the current provisions of the TRIPS agreement.

Instead, the Australian Government must engage with and support a much more comprehensive and inclusive agreement that would meaningfully allow the world to overcome a disease that has killed millions of people and created the gravest public health crisis of our time.

"It is unfathomable that more than two years into this pandemic wealthy countries are still justifying preventing global access to the types of tests and treatments that they provide to their own populations, because that's what this waiver will continue to do. The most recent proposal that countries within the EU want to hide behind and label as 'progress' is not a solution for this pandemic, and it acts as a terrible blueprint for any future health crisis." Said **Ry Atkinson, Strategic Campaigner at Amnesty International Australia.**

"Health workers in the Pacific continue to be on the frontline of this deadly pandemic. Many neighbouring Pacific Island countries have co-sponsored the original TRIPS waiver as it is a crucial measure to increase access to COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines. The Morrison Government must show leadership at The WTO to support the original TRIPS



waiver and reject the WTO secretariat's counter proposal." Said **Tom Reddington, Oceania Sub-regional Secretary, Public Services International**

"The Australian Government should oppose this weak proposal because it would continue to place the interests of pharmaceutical companies above peoples' lives. It will not enable increased access for COVID vaccines and treatments that low-income countries desperately need. Australia should instead support a comprehensive waiver that will actually save lives." Said **Dr Patricia Ranald, Convener of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network.**

"The text as it stands continues to place pharmaceutical corporate interests over the needs of global health. It adds more unnecessary barriers than existed before negotiations began and failure to act now on treatments and tests is inexcusable." Said **Andrew Buchanan, CEO, Oxfam Australia.**

**ENDS**

**For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Amnesty International Media on +61 423 552 208 or [media@amnesty.org.au](mailto:media@amnesty.org.au)**

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