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MEDIA RELEASE

October 4, 2015

TPP talks delayed again: still deadlocked on medicines, tobacco and dairy access

“The extension of secret TPP talks into Sunday October 4 shows the US desperation to force a deal, despite fundamental differences remaining over medicines and access to US sugar and dairy markets,” Dr Patricia Ranald, Coordinator of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network said today.

“Reports from observers at the TPP negotiations in Atlanta Georgia indicate that the main sticking points are still Australia’s refusal, along with Chile and Peru, to agree to more than five years’ monopoly for data on costly biologic medicines, which would delay the availability of cheaper forms of these medicines. [Studies](#) have shown that even one year’s delay in availability would cost the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme hundreds of millions of dollars, and higher costs would eventually be passed on to patients. Cancer patients have called such delays a [death sentence](#),” said Dr Ranald.

“The US negotiating position is dictated by its major industries and their Congress supporters. Pharmaceutical companies want an additional three years of monopolies on biologic drugs. The danger is that Australia will agree to compromise on this issue in return for increased access to US sugar and dairy markets. But so far the US has been constrained by agribusiness from offering significant access. The extension is a last ditch attempt to force Australia to compromise.

“Tobacco companies are pressuring the US to remove an exemption which would have prevented more cases like the current Philip Morris suit against the Australian government for billions of dollars. If this pressure is successful, Australia could be asked to choose between its right to have affordable medicines, and its right to regulate tobacco in the interests of public health.

“This is unacceptable. Australia’s policy on access to life-saving medicines and tobacco regulation should be decided through open democratic processes, not secretly traded away behind closed doors,” said Dr Ranald.

“Until now Trade Minister Robb has been [standing firm](#) on five years for medicines, and has said he was aware that the opposition and minor parties in the Senate would likely reject the required change to the Therapeutic Goods Act.

“We urge Mr Robb to keep his promise to the Australian people, to say no to longer medicine monopolies and reject this shameful deal. We will campaign to ensure that any extension of medicine monopolies will be blocked in the Senate,” said Dr Ranald.

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