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TPP talks: Robb should reject "death sentence" deal on medicines

"The TPP negotiations in Atlanta, Georgia have been extended for a day in a desperate attempt to reach a deal. The US has delayed its offers on market access for sugar and dairy products until the last minute, and is now pressuring Australia to agree to stronger monopolies which would delay affordable access to costly biologic medicines used to treat cancer," 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 Trade Minister Andrew Robb is considering caving in to US pressure for more than Australia's current five years data exclusivity for 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

Until now Mr Robb claimed he was standing firm on five years, and said he was aware that the opposition and minor parties in the Senate would likely reject the required change to the Therapeutic Goods Act. He now appears ready to trade off access to medicines for last-minute offers on access to US sugar and other markets.

"Mr Robb should keep his promise, say no to longer medicine monopolies and reject this shameful deal. We will campaign to ensure that any change will be blocked in the Senate," said Dr Ranald.

Contact Dr Patricia Ranald 0419 695 841