



BULLETIN April 2014

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Introduction

This Bulletin assesses the recently announced free trade agreement with Japan, the stalled Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations, and the growing concerns about investor rights to sue governments (ISDS) both in Australia and internationally.

We also report on the progress of our campaigns and invite you to take part – by joining us at your local May Day march with TPP signs, supporting our social media campaigns, or attending an upcoming event.

Free Trade Agreement with Japan announced

In April the Trade Minister announced the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement, a free trade deal with Japan.

The agreement does not include the controversial rights for foreign investors to sue governments (ISDS). This is a win for the campaign against ISDS led by AFTINET, which has made ISDS a sensitive issue in Australia. At short notice, almost 500 of our supporters sent an urgent email to the Trade Minister during the negotiations from our website asking him to reject ISDS in the trade talks.

However, the text of the agreement remains secret, and AFTINET is calling for the text of the agreement to be released to allow public scrutiny of the potential downsides of the deal. The only information currently available is a short [summary](#) on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which is mostly selected information about increased market access for some Australian agricultural products. There is no detail, for example, about the impact of what appears to be the immediate reduction of Australian tariffs on Japanese car imports. This could have an even more severe impact on employment in that industry which is already facing closure in three years' time.

It may take some months for the agreement to be approved by Cabinet and tabled in Parliament. Once approved, the text cannot be changed. It will then be tabled reviewed by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, which will call for public submissions.

Senate inquiry into ISDS in Australia as movement against it grows

Senate inquiry into ISDS in Australia

Greens Senator Peter Whish-Wilson tabled a bill in the Senate in March which would ban the right of investors to sue governments ([Investor-State Dispute Settlement or ISDS](#)), from all trade agreements. The bill was tabled following growing widespread public opposition to ISDS, with tens of thousands of Australians signing on to social media petitions.

More than [100 submissions](#) have been made so far to the public inquiry into ISDS conducted by the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee. The submissions are from a diverse range of community groups and individuals and demonstrated the extent of the opposition to ISDS in Australia.

The Guardian published a [report](#) on the inquiry featuring AFTINET members The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of New South Wales (CPSA), and the Catholic organisation the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes NSW (CLRI).

AFTINET made an extensive submission to the inquiry which you can [download here](#).

Outcry over Pacific Rim vs El Salvador case

More than 300 organisations worldwide, including AFTINET, have signed a letter which accuses the Pacific Rim mining company of using an international tribunal to "subvert a democratic nationwide debate over mining and environmental health" in El Salvador.

Pacific Rim, which has recently been acquired by Australian OceanaGold, is suing El Salvador for millions of dollars over their refusal to issue a mining permit based on environmental reasons.

AFTINET supported an Australian tour by El Salvador activist Vidalina Morales, who spoke at our AGM last year, and our members have supported rallies at the OceanaGold office in Melbourne to publicise the issue and pressure them to drop the case. Read more on [The Guardian](#).

Opposition to ISDS around the world

As the number of ISDS cases lodged increases each year, more and more countries are questioning the system and many are withdrawing from agreements containing ISDS.

In March, the government of Indonesia declared that it will withdraw from all 67 treaties containing ISDS provisions, and the German government announced that it will oppose the inclusion of ISDS in a trade deal between the US and the EU. France is also objecting to ISDS.

Germany, France and Indonesia join a growing group of countries expressing opposition towards ISDS provisions, including India, South Africa, and 10 countries in Latin America.

Despite the previous ALP government's opposition to ISDS, and this growing worldwide opposition, the current government has included ISDS provisions in the free trade agreement with Korea announced late last year, and is negotiating it on a 'case-by-case' basis in the TPP.

TPP talks are still stalled as opposition grows

Talks stalled as the US and Japan fail to agree

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations have been moving slowly as the two largest economies involved, Japan and the US, continue to disagree on market access issues, especially for agricultural and motor vehicle products. The two governments had hoped to make a breakthrough in the negotiations ahead of President Obama's recent visit to Asia, but failed to do so. There was no agreement announced at the end of the visit, just continued negotiations.

The Australian government has claimed that the bilateral agreement with Japan is a precedent for the TPP, but lobby groups in the US disagree and say the deal could potentially undermine the TPP, since Japan has only agreed to very limited access to selected agricultural products in the agreement with Australia.

Little to gain for Australia in the TPP

The stalemate in the negotiations caused by the US and Japan is indicative of the way these more powerful economies are driving the negotiations, and shows there is little benefit for Australia.

However, through leaked documents we know that the US is still pushing for changes to our regulation which would increase the cost of medicines, undermine the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, allow foreign investors to sue governments, increase copyright at great cost to consumers and restrict freedom on the internet.

The Australian government should not agree to any of these harmful proposals as a trade-off for dubious promises for potential gains in agricultural market access.

Opposition to the TPP in Australia continues to grow

As the negotiations drag on, more and more people are becoming aware of the dangers of the TPP negotiations, and are calling for the text of the agreement to be released for proper public and parliamentary debate.

Earlier in the year, AFTINET sent a [letter to local governments](#) about the TPP. In April, the City of Sydney passed a resolution based on our recommendations, and other councils are currently following this up.

AFTINET has made a number of presentations at different events in recent months, including a very successful community forum held in Newtown in Sydney which filled the hall.

AFTINET organised TPP action at the nationwide March in March, held around the country on the 25-16th of March. Dr Patricia Randal, AFTINET's Convener, spoke to a crowd of more than 10,000 people in Sydney, and activists from around the country appeared with signs and banners about the TPP, including in Melbourne, Canberra, Perth, Hobart and Katoomba.



Check out AFTINET's [album of photos](#) from March in March. On the day, many people posted photos and videos from around the country, which you can view on [Twitter](#).

Submissions open for Senate Inquiry on Korea agreement

The proposed Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement (KAFTA) was referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for [inquiry and report](#) on March 27, 2014, by the Shadow Spokesperson for Trade, Senator Penny Wong.

AFTINET is particularly concerned about the inclusion of Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) in this agreement. Including ISDS in KAFTA means that Korean investors will be able to sue our governments if they adopt laws or policies that could 'harm' their investment.

It is claimed that "safeguards" in the agreement will protect environmental or public health polices from being subject to ISDS, but these same safeguards [have not been effective in other agreements](#).

AFTINET will be making a submission to the inquiry and we are encouraging our members and supporters to make a submission calling for a rejection of KAFTA on the basis that it includes ISDS provisions. We have drafted a [document containing some key points](#) on why ISDS should not be included in the agreement.

You can use the submission you made to the Senate inquiry on ISDS with slight changes to refer to the Korea FTA.

Submissions should be submitted online at:

<https://senate.aph.gov.au/submissions/pages/index.aspx> or sent by email to fadt.sen@aph.gov.au as an attached PDF or Word document. You must include your full postal address and contact details.

The text of KAFTA is available on the [DFAT website](#).

Pacific Islands trade agreement progressing slowly

Progress on the PACER-Plus negotiations for a trade agreement between Australia, New Zealand and 14 developing Pacific Island nations has been slow. The Pacific Islands are pushing for additional development assistance to be given as part of the trade agreement, which is being resisted by Australia and New Zealand. The Pacific Islands also want to include labour mobility in the deal, which would allow more Pacific Island workers in to Australia and New Zealand. So far, Australia has been unwilling to commit to this and New Zealand is looking at offering a labour mobility program outside of the framework of the trade agreement.

AFTINET is concerned about pressure to include labour mobility because people are not commodities, and trade agreements do not have safeguards for worker's rights. From AFTINET's perspective, labour mobility arrangements should be made in a separate arrangement and focus more on development, rather than as a negotiating point for a trade agreement with the Pacific Islands.

AFTINET is also concerned about the impacts of PACER-Plus on [services](#) in the Pacific Islands, and is campaigning for development, not trade, to be the main focus of Australia's relationship with the Pacific Islands.

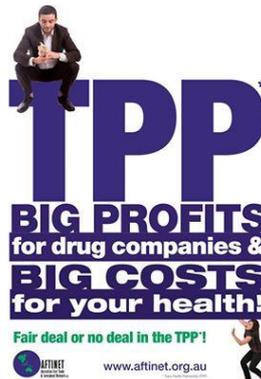
Take Action!

Share an image on Social Media

Thanks to the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association, who have kindly provided these images, AFTINET has been harnessing the power of social media to spread our messages about the TPP.

Please help us by sharing these images on your own Facebook page or via Twitter!

Click on an image to view it on Facebook, then sign in to your account and press 'Share' (found at the bottom of the image).



Social media is a great way to help educate your friends and family about the TPP and to encourage them to take action.

You can also ['like' AFTINET on Facebook](#) and ['follow' us on Twitter](#) so you get our updates as soon as they are posted.

Join our Social Media Thunderclap

AFTINET is running our first social media 'Thunderclap'!

A Thunderclap is when social media users sign up in advance to post a specific message using either their Twitter or their Facebook accounts on behalf of an organisation (in this case, AFTINET). Then, at the same time, on the same day, the message is automatically posted to everyone's account and creates a storm of social media activity around a specific issue.

We're organising a Thunderclap which will send a clear message to Trade Minister Andrew Robb that we do not want investor rights to sue governments in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) or any other trade agreement.

Please [sign up](#) to send this message and encourage your networks to do so too.

If enough people support the campaign, the messages will be sent at midday on the 16th of May (right before another TPP negotiating round is expected to start).

[Sign up for the Thunderclap using your Facebook or Twitter account here.](#)

More actions you can take:

- **Contact your MP or Senator** about the TPP and other trade deals. You can use AFTINET's [letter to the Trade Minister](#) as a basis. Find out who your representative is [here](#).
- **Organise a local meeting** or meeting in your workplace to discuss the TPP and to take action. These local meetings will build momentum for larger public events over the next few months. For more information, you can [download the information kit](#) for organisers.
- **Contact your local councillors** and ask them to discuss the implications of the TPP for local governments in Council, and to send a message to the Trade Minister. AFTINET has already sent a [letter to all local councils](#) in the major states, and the City of Sydney council has passed a resolution based on our recommendation. We need our members to help us by following up with individual councillors.
- **Make a donation to support the campaign** - You can [donate online via E-Give](#) or email campaign@aftinet.org.au for other options.

Upcoming Events

Public meeting in Sutherland: Fair Deal or No Deal in the TPP, April 29

6.30pm, April 29, Multi-Purpose Centre, 123 Flora Street, Sutherland

Speakers: Dr Patricia Randal (AFTINET), Isabel McIntosh, (Lock the Gate Alliance), Michael Whaites (NSW Nurses and Midwives Association).

This event is supported by AFTINET and the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre. For more information and to RSVP, contact Phil Smith on 0412 338 687.

May Day March in Sydney, May 4

11.30am, May 4, Parliament house, Macquarie Street

AFTINET is organising a TPP group at the May Day March in Sydney. Please bring along your TPP banners and signs and join us in handing out fliers. We will meet next to the statue of the pig outside Sydney Hospital. Look for the green and white AFTINET sign.

May Day Marches will be held around the country on the weekend May 3-4th. If you're not in Sydney, please attend your local march with TPP banners and signs. Take some photos and email them to us after the event: campaign@aftinet.org.au

Crows Nest Public Forum on the TPP, May 7

7pm, May 21st, Crows Nest Community Centre, 2 Ernest Place, Crows Nest

Speakers: Senator Peter Whish-Wilson (Greens Spokesperson on Trade) and Jemma Williams (AFTINET)

This event is being organised by the Lower North Shore Greens. Please download their [event flyer](#) or contact greenstppforum@outlook.com for more information.



Trade Justice Dinner 2014

Please join us for an entertaining evening of fine food and interesting discussion at our annual fundraising dinner with auction and raffle prizes. All proceeds go to fund AFTINET's trade justice work.

Thursday 29th May 2014

The Hellenic Restaurant

251 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, 2000 (between Liverpool & Bathurst Sts)

Special Guest Speaker:

Dr Jim Stanford

Jim Stanford is a Canadian economist, author, and public speaker. He works for the Canadian union Unifor and writes for the Toronto Globe and Mail newspaper. He is a trade justice activist and the author of 'Economics for Everyone: A short Guide to the Economics of Capitalism (2008).



6.30pm \$60 per person

Savour the flavour of a delicious Greek banquet

Vegetarian/Vegan options available

RSVP 22nd May (Booking form overleaf)

AFTINET Trade Justice Dinner 2014 Booking Form

Please circle your choice. Please note that drinks are not included, but a bar is available.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ P / Code _____

Email: _____

Any dietary requirements (please state) _____ No. people _____

Please book _____ place/s at \$60 per person, or _____ table/s of 8 at \$480

You can pay by cheque, credit card or bank transfer.

Cheques should be payable to 'AFTINET Ltd'

I enclose a cheque for \$_____

Please charge \$_____ to my _____ Visa _____ Mastercard (please circle)

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date: ____ / ____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Direct Debit of \$_____ to BSB 062 005 Account No: 1033 9684 Ref: Dinner

If paying by bank transfer, **please include your name and 'dinner'** in the reference so we can identify your payment.

Post cheques, or fax or email completed credit card forms to AFTINET, 128 Chalmers St,
Surry Hills NSW 2010. Phone: 9699 3686. Fax: 9699 3717. Email: campaign@aftinet.org.au

RSVP 22nd May 2014