



BULLETIN May 2015

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Strong global campaign against TPP slows talks again

AFTINET held a forum on the TPP attended by 130 people at NSW Parliament House on April 16. Photos and audio recordings are available [here](#). The forum was reported in the [Sydney Morning Herald](#) and was one of [755 events](#) held in four continents to protest against the TPP and the Transatlantic Partnership (TTIP) being negotiated between the US and the EU.

Many of these events were part of the strong US [community campaign](#) which has pressured [most Democrats and a block of Republicans](#) continue to oppose “fast track” legislation, which would enable the final text of the TPP to be rushed through the US Congress without amendment.

The Fast Track Bill was introduced to Congress in April but could not attract majority support in the House of Representatives, and so has not gone to a vote at the time of writing. The Democrats are moving various amendments to the Bill to slow it down. If it is not passed before the proposed TPP Trade Ministers meeting to be held in Guam on May 26-8, it may lapse because the TPP is so unpopular that neither Republicans nor Democrats want it to be an issue in the US Presidential election race which will take off in mid-year. Democrat presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has not endorsed the TPP, saying only that trade agreements should improve living standards.

Japanese Prime Minister Abe was in Washington in the last week of April, but, despite predictions, there was no Fast Track vote and no further progress on market access negotiations between the US and Japan. The Japanese, Canadian and NZ governments are all saying that negotiations will not be finalised until after fast track is passed.

A draft of the [TPP investment chapter](#) dated January 2015 appeared on the WikiLeaks website on March 26. AFTINET’s [analysis](#) focused on the fact that the Australian government has proposed that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, the Medicare Benefits Scheme, the

Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator be specifically exempted from ISDS claims, but this has not been agreed. This so far unsuccessful attempt to protect these specific institutions from ISDS shows that the government does not believe its own assurances, given for ISDS in the [Korea](#) and China free trade agreements, that general carve-outs or exceptions for health, environment and public welfare regulation will prevent governments from being sued for regulating in these areas.

Intense coverage of the TPP has continued in Australia. On March 26 the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Melbourne Age* and the *Canberra Times* [reported](#) that proposed new food labelling rules in response to the contaminated berries scandal could result in foreign companies using ISDS in the Korea, China or Trans-Pacific trade agreements to sue the government for damages if their profits are reduced.

March 27 saw coverage of our media release on the leaked investment chapter of the TPP in the [Sydney Morning Herald](#), the [Melbourne Age](#) and [Canberra Times](#), also [ABC national on-line news](#) and SBS [national online news](#). See also Kyla Tienhaara's excellent piece on [the Drum](#) blog website and ABC Radio National [The World Today](#)

On March 31, 2015, ABC national TV program *Lateline* covered [opposition to the TPP in the US Congress](#)., [Australian critics of the TPP](#) and a [debate about the TPP](#) between Alan Oxley, and Greens Senator Peter Whish Wilson.

On April 6 the [Sydney Morning Herald](#), the *Melbourne Age* and the *Canberra Times* reported that eight health and community organisations sent an open letter to the Trade Minister Andrew Robb expressing "grave concerns" about the leaked investment chapter of the TPP.

On April 8 [Harriet Alexander](#) reported s in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Melbourne Age* and *Canberra Times* that the peak lobby group for American pharmaceutical manufacturers has been given privileged access to negotiations for a major regional trade pact that could see the cost of medicines skyrocket in Australia.

On April 10 Deborah Gleeson, Kyla Tienhaara and Sharon Friel argued in [The Conversation](#) that the leaked investment chapter shows that concerns about risks to health in the TPP identified by health experts are justified.

On April 12 [Michaela Whitbourn reported in the Sydney Sunday Sun Herald](#) that the TPP may create new criminal sanctions for illicit downloading of films and TV shows, following a legal battle over Hollywood blockbuster *Dallas Buyers Club*

On April 16, Pat Ranald outlined the dangers of ISDS in the TPP in answer to an article defending ISDS from an investment lawyer in [The Conversation](#).

On April 21 Pat Ranald was interviewed by Luke Martin for an article in the *Griffith Review*, and on April 24: by Leon Byner on Adelaide commercial radio station 5AA.

On May 4 Pat Ranald's [article](#) on the Senate Inquiry into the trade agreement process was published in the *Canberra Times*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Melbourne Age*.

AFTINET video on Philip Morris tobacco company ISDS case against Australia

On April 20 AFTINET released the two-minute [video on the Philip Morris tobacco company ISDS case](#) against the Australian plain packaging legislation, made by AFTINET and the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association. Please view and share through Facebook and twitter if you have not already done so.

Senate Inquiry Into the trade agreement process hears evidence

Dr Patricia Ranald gave [evidence](#) on behalf of AFTINET to the Senate Inquiry into the trade agreement process on May 4. Of over 90 submissions, only two government agencies (the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Export Council) supported the current process with no change. Business groups (AIG and ACCI) were critical of the current process and want independent assessment of the final text before it is signed, and access to the text during negotiations for selected industry “advisors” as is done in the US.

Most of the other submissions are from individuals and community organisations which support changes similar to those in the [AFTINET submission](#), including open access to texts, release of the final text before it is signed and for Parliament to vote on the whole agreement, not just the implementing legislation. Other groups giving evidence included the Australian Digital Alliance the Public Health Association of Australia, the ACTU, the NTEU, the AMWU, the Human Rights Commission, the Law Council of Australia, the EDO, CHOICE, and various critical academics.

AFTINET Dinner, May 20, Hellenic Restaurant, Elizabeth Street, book now!

AFTINET Trade Justice Dinner 2015

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

Wednesday 20th May 2015

The Hellenic Restaurant

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

Special Guest Speaker: Katie Hirono

Katie Hirono is the lead author of the health impact assessment on the TPP which was a [front page story](#) in March, detailing impacts on medicine prices, tobacco control, alcohol and food labelling. She is a Research Associate at the Centre for Health Equity Training Research and Evaluation at UNSW



6.30pm \$66 per person

Savour the flavour of a delicious Greek banquet

Vegetarian/Vegan options available

RSVP 15th May (Booking form below)

AFTINET Trade Justice Dinner 2015 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 \$66 per person, or ___ table/s of 8 at \$528

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: your name and 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 May 15 2015

PACER-Plus campaign intensifies

Drafts of the [services](#) and [investment](#) chapters from 2013 have been leaked and received [media coverage](#). Pacific Island civil society groups have launched a [campaign](#) calling for a halt to of the negotiations, because Australia and New Zealand are pursuing their commercial interests at the expense of Pacific Island countries. They have been joined by [unions](#) from New Zealand and Australia.

RCEP consultations begin belatedly

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations between 10 ASEAN countries plus Australia, NZ, China, Japan, India, South Korea began in 2013 and have now intensified.

Pat Ranald and Dr Deborah Gleeson met with RCEP negotiators on intellectual property and investment to raise our grave concerns about a [leaked Japanese document](#) which proposed extensions of monopoly rights on patents, and about proposals for ISDS. It was reported that the Australian government was not supporting the patent proposals, and had not taken a position on ISDS. We know from other sources that there is strong opposition to both the patent and ISDS proposals from India and other countries. Negotiators proposed that there would be more regular consultation on these and other issues as negotiations proceed.

AFTINET : follow us on facebook and twitter!

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