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US Congress Fast Track for Trans-Pacific (TPP) trade deal suffers another body blow

“The announcement by US Senate Democrat Majority Leader Harry Reid in the Wall St Journal that he is opposed to Congress granting fast-track authority is another body blow against the White House attempt to push Fast Track through in order to speed up the TPP negotiations,” Dr Patricia Ranald, Convenor of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network said today.

“Fast Track authority means that the Congress cannot change the text of trade agreements, but can only vote yes or no to the whole deal,” explained Dr Ranald.

“The Fast Track Bill is aimed at reassuring other TPP governments like Australia about the capacity of the Obama administration to deliver on commitments made in negotiations, which are continuing this year after missing the US-imposed deadline of December 2013. The Australian Government would be extremely foolish to rely on such reassurances.”

“Congress has not agreed to fast-track since it lapsed in 2007. In November last year, 151 Democrats vowed not to support fast track. Leading Democrats confirmed this opposition when the bill was introduced earlier this month. The Tea Party Republicans are for different reasons vehemently opposed to reducing Congressional rights to change the text of trade agreements,” said Dr Ranald.

“Senator Reid’s announcement confirms the lack of Democrat support. The White House was not able to get Sandy Levin, the relevant senior Democrat Committee member in the House of Representatives, to sponsor the Bill. Congressman Levin issued his own statement opposing the Bill.

“US opinion polls reported in the Wall St Journal also show a 62% opposition to Fast Track.” said Dr Ranald.

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