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Media Release

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Unions, community groups want safeguards for health, environment and labour rights in US-Trans Pacific trade pact

Thirty Australian unions and community groups today asked the Trade Minister to safeguard the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Australian local content in media, regulation of GE food, regulation of foreign investment and industry policies that support local employment in the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) negotiations which start on Monday March 15.

The TPPA involves the US, Australia, Chile, Peru, Brunei, Singapore, New Zealand and Vietnam in negotiations for a new trade agreement based on the bilateral agreements the US has with five of these countries. This will resurrect all of the issues that were debated in the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement in 2004.

The organisations represent a wide range of union, church, health, environment and pensioners' groups including the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, the Public Health Association of Australia, the Australian Nursing Federation, the Australian Pensioners and Superannuants Association, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance.

"US business groups have said in public submissions that they want changes to the PBS, local content in media, labelling of GE food, regulation of foreign investment and government purchasing policies that support local employment. They also want an investor-state complaints process which will give special rights to international corporations to sue governments for damages. We are asking the Trade Minister to stand firm against these demands, and to support strong, enforceable labour and environment standards in any agreement," said Harvey Purse, AFTINET campaigner.

See full statement and list of signatories attached.

For comment contact:

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