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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## ***Abbott's US visit will not solve Trans-Pacific Trade (TPP) stalemate***

"Prime Minister Abbott's Washington talks on the stalled TPP between the US, Australia and ten other Pacific Rim countries will not solve the three major intractable problems which have dragged the negotiations into their fifth year," Dr Patricia Ranald, Convenor of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) said today.

"Firstly, the US is still driving the TPP agenda on behalf of its major export industries for changes to other countries' domestic laws which other governments have resisted. These are not traditional trade issues, but are health and other policies which should be decided through open democratic and parliamentary processes, not through secret trade deals," said Dr Ranald.

"US Pharmaceutical companies want longer patents and higher prices for medicines. IT companies want longer copyright payments and stricter controls over internet downloads which would cost more and restrict internet access for consumers, schools and libraries. Hollywood media companies want less Australian content rules for our film, TV and other media. And US corporations want special rights for foreign investors to sue governments in international tribunals if domestic laws or policies can be claimed to "harm" their investment. The Philip Morris tobacco company is currently using an obscure Hong Kong investment agreement to sue the Australian Government for damages over plain packaging legislation, despite the Australian High Court's rejection of their compensation claim under Australian law. This undermines our democracy and sovereignty," explained Dr Ranald.

"Secondly, the two major players, the US and Japan, cannot agree about the traditional trade issues of increased access to each other's agricultural and vehicle markets, and have not made any market access offers to other governments. This leaves the Australian and other Governments waiting in the wings, and shows who is really running the negotiations," said Dr Ranald.

"Thirdly, strong domestic opposition to the TPP in the US has influenced both major parties and has prevented the Congress from even introducing the 'fast track' legislation which would remove the constitutional power of Congress to amend any TPP deal. The US cannot deliver on any deal until this legislation is passed. The strength of US community opposition means neither party wants the TPP to become an issue in the November Congressional elections. This means the negotiations could drag on into 2015," said Dr Ranald.

"The TPP is not in Australia's interest. We call on the Abbott Government to reject US proposals and to release the text of the TPP for full public and parliamentary debate before any decision to endorse it is made by Cabinet," concluded Dr Ranald.

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