



AFTINET
Australian Fair Trade
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November 21, 2013

The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP
Minister for Trade and Investment
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Cc: The Hon Tony Abbott, Prime Minister
Peter Dutton, Minister for Health

Re: Australian Government support for 5-country counter-proposal on patents and medicines in TPPA negotiations

Dear Minister,

The Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) is concerned that draft text from the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) negotiations released by Wikileaks last week indicates that the United States is continuing to press for extreme intellectual property provisions in the TPPA. If accepted, this would severely restrict access to affordable medicines in Australia and other TPPA countries by delaying the availability of cheaper generic medicines.

We are deeply concerned about the US proposal. It would affect the affordability of much-needed drugs for large numbers of Australians on low incomes (such as pensioners) who may be forced to postpone or forgo purchasing medicines if co-payments increase. We are also concerned about implications for the hundreds of thousands of people in developing countries in our region, such as Vietnam, for whom drugs are already unaffordable.

The leaked text shows that five countries (New Zealand, Canada, Singapore, Chile and Malaysia) have made a counter-proposal that represents a far more moderate and flexible approach to intellectual property privileges that would largely protect access to medicines and meet public health objectives.

We understand that Australia was initially involved in the development of the counter-proposal, but it is not clear that Australia is continuing to support the counter-proposal in the negotiations.

The success of the counter-proposal - and future access to medicines for many people on low incomes in Australia and in the region - may depend on the position Australia takes on these issues.

We therefore urge you to reject the extreme proposal of the US and actively support the counter-proposal for patents and medicines made by New Zealand, Canada, Singapore, Chile and Malaysia.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Patricia Ranald
Convenor, Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network