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## **Media Release**

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# **Petition challenges foreign investor rights to sue government over domestic laws**

“Over eleven thousand Australians have signed petitions against foreign investor rights to sue government over domestic laws in trade agreements,” Dr. Patricia Ranald, Convener of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network, said today. These rights are known as investor-state dispute settlement or ISDS.

“Over three thousand have signed a [petition](#) over the last month calling for rejection of foreign investor rights to sue in the Korea Free Trade Agreement. The Trade Minister is expected to recommend to Cabinet that Australia sign the Korea FTA in coming weeks”.

“This builds on a previous [petition](#) signed by over eight thousand people opposing the inclusion of foreign investor rights to sue in all trade agreements, sent to the Trade Minister in December,” said Dr. Ranald.

Dr Ranald is in Canberra today to deliver the latest petition to the Trade Minister. Electronic copies are also being sent to Cabinet Ministers.

“The strong public opposition is based on [examples](#) like the Philip Morris tobacco company suing the Australian government for hundreds of millions over Australia’s plain packaging law, and the Quebec government being sued by a US mining company for \$250 million because it dared to conduct an environmental review of shale gas mining. This undermines democracy and sovereignty,” explained Dr. Ranald.

“A [survey](#) conducted by the Australia Institute also shows a majority (65%) of Australians oppose the inclusion of the right of investors to sue governments being included in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP). The TPP negotiations are continuing in February,” said Dr. Ranald.

“The Abbott Coalition Government policy of supporting investor rights to sue contrasts with the Howard Coalition Government’s refusal to include it in the Australia-US FTA in 2004, and the previous ALP government’s stance against it in the Korea FTA and the TPP,” said Dr. Ranald.

The text of all trade agreements is secret and only becomes public after it is signed off by Cabinet. The agreements are then reviewed by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties but neither the Committee nor Parliament can change the text.

“We call upon the government to reject foreign investor rights to sue governments and to release the text of the Korea FTA and the TPP for public and Parliamentary scrutiny **before** they are signed off by Cabinet,” said Dr. Ranald.

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