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Trade Minister Robb should reject TPP tradeoffs in Singapore as Australian study warns of health impacts of US proposals

“As the TPP Ministerial Meeting begins tomorrow in Singapore Trade Minister Robb should resist US demands for compromises on foreign investor rights to sue governments and stronger patents on medicines,” Dr Patricia Ranald, Convenor of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network, said today.

TPP Trade Ministers meet on February 22-25, following a week of talks between Chief negotiators in which the US has been pressing other governments on its controversial proposals.

“This week senior health academics from seven Australian universities [released](#) a policy brief the potential impacts of the TPP on the health of Australians. The [policy brief](#) concludes that the US proposals for stronger medicine would increase the cost of the PBS for the government and taxpayers and that investor rights to sue governments would reduce the ability of the Australian Government to tackle the harm caused by tobacco and alcohol. The Minister should not compromise on these issues,” said Dr Ranald.

“Negotiators are now claiming to have reached agreement on many aspects of the 29 chapters in the agreement, but key differences remain in areas like medicine patents, investor rights to sue and the regulation of state owned enterprises. These differences will be negotiated in the light of agricultural market access offers from the US,” said Dr Ranald.

“Minister Robb would be reckless to agree to compromise on these issues in return for promised increases in access to US agricultural markets, which the US cannot guarantee would be delivered by the US Congress,” said Dr Ranald.

“Senior US Democrat and Republican [Congress members](#) are stating even more strongly that they will not grant Fast Track authority to give up rights to amend the text of trade agreements. Without Fast Track, the Congress can unpick any deal reached in negotiations,” explained Dr Ranald.

“Nor is the Japanese government likely to agree to open its agricultural markets to the US or Australia without Fast Track,” said Dr Ranald.

“The Australian and other Governments should not be bullied by the US into closing a deal which would be damaging to public health. Australian policies on medicines and other public interest issues should be decided through democratic public and parliamentary debate, not by secret trade negotiations,” said Dr Ranald.

“[Senior Legislators](#) in TPP countries have called for the release of the TPP text and [surveys](#) show a majority of Australians support this demand. We call on governments to release the text before any deal is signed,” said Dr Ranald.

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