

Secret deal could harm health for short-term trade gains

Public Health Association media release

9 November 2011

The Public Health Association (PHA) is calling for openness on the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) because the agreement could harm our health future.

This week far-reaching 'free trade agreement' negotiations are taking place in Hawaii between New Zealand and eight other countries, including the US which wants to limit New Zealand's ability to make laws and adopt policies that might interfere with 'free trade'.

PHA National Executive Officer Dr Gay Keating says much of what New Zealanders value could be at stake here.

“For example, it looks as though the agreement could limit Pharmac’s ability to purchase medicines at a reasonable price for all New Zealanders – solely to protect the interests of overseas global corporations.

“Likewise it seems it could stop New Zealand making laws to control harm from tobacco and alcohol, also to protect foreign interests.”

Dr Keating says laws about protecting food quality, being smokefree, or controlling alcohol advertising are for New Zealanders to decide upon.

“We should not be told what to do by other countries who only want to protect their trade interests – just as we should not let smaller Pacific states be bullied into bad laws that create bad health.

“We're just lining up with the biggest group of doctors in the world, the American Medical Association, in saying that health concerns must take priority over commercial interests in international trade agreements,¹ but because of the secrecy, we don't know what our government is considering doing.”

The PHA supports today’s march, which begins at midday in Wellington’s Civic Square, to protest the TPPA negotiations because laws in New Zealand that would encourage good health are too important for secrecy.

ENDS

Contact:

Dr Gay Keating

National Executive Officer

Public Health Association

0273 414 708

¹ http://web.me.com/jane_kelsey/Jane/TPPA_files/ama_comment_on_tpp_8_sept_2011.pdf