

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The petition of Robert John Reid

of 14B Sullivan Avenue, Mangere Bridge, Auckland 2022

General Secretary of the National Distribution Union

and others

Respectfully requests:

That

you, as our elected representatives, take an active role in ensuring that the negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) are opened to transparent and participatory processes from this time forward.

We are told that the TPPA is supposed to be a 21st century trade agreement. For us, such an agreement must address the challenges that will shape our livelihoods, communities and our planet over the next ninety years - climate change, financial instability, indigenous rights, sustainable livelihoods, food sovereignty, energy scarcity, pandemics, insecurity, inequality and poverty, and impose constraints on corporate greed.

Instead, we understand that the proposed TPPA would intrude far behind our national borders to not only restrict our financial regulation and grant new rights for foreign investors, but also limit how things like healthcare, energy, natural resources and culture will be regulated; how our tax dollars may be spent; what sort of food safety and labelling will be allowed; whether medicines will remain affordable; and more.

What is being proposed and the way it is being negotiated are undemocratic and hypocritical.

First, a TPPA would bind our domestic policies and laws for decades ahead; even when an elected government has a different mandate or faces new realities, its hands will be tied.

Second, New Zealand's obligations under the agreement would be enforced in international, not domestic courts: as a minimum, the government could face trade sanctions if it failed to comply; and, at worst, foreign investors could sue the government in a secret international court to enforce their special new rights.

Third, the proposed trade treaty aims to give foreign investors guaranteed rights and enforcement powers that are currently denied to Maori under the Treaty of Waitangi.

Fourth, these negotiations are being conducted in secret, something citizens and legislators would never tolerate for new domestic legislation. A more transparent TPPA process would provide some basic safeguards against errors and identify risks that may not be apparent to negotiators and the government. It could also help convince people that a TPPA really will replace the past trade pact models that benefitted and privileged special interests and multinational firms.

The excuse that greater transparency would undermine negotiations presumes that these proposals would not survive the sunshine of scrutiny. Even the World Trade Organization (WTO), hardly renowned as a bastion of transparency, now posts country documents and negotiating texts on its website for scrutiny. If politicians and negotiators cannot convince the public through robust, open and informed debate about what is being negotiated in our name, the talks should not proceed.

We are demanding, at a minimum, that

(a) the Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Committee convenes a hearing into the potential implications for New Zealand of the TPPA as a matter of urgency; and

(b) the Parliament resolves that the New Zealand government publish simultaneously on its website all documents that it tables at the TPPA negotiations and proposes to all the other the TPPA negotiating parties at the forthcoming negotiations that they agree collectively to

(i) Create and maintain a public website which governments and civil society can post information and participate as equals in a dialogue and debate;

(ii) Post the draft text of each chapter as it is completed to open them to expert and public scrutiny;

(iii) Post countries' position papers on specific subjects that are tabled during negotiations; and

(iv) Guarantee that all civil society has equal access to information and engagement with the process, regardless of whether they are supportive or critical of the proposed agreement, ending the privileged treatment that pro-TPPA corporate lobby groups have enjoyed to date.

Failure to agree to such transparency and allow for open debate will further discredit the TPPA negotiating process. It will strip any negotiated text of democratic legitimacy and the goodwill needed from people and parliamentarians to make it work for the 21st century.

Member of Parliament

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Name	Signature
Gabrielle M. Keating National Executive Officer for	G. M. Keating
Public Health Association of New Zealand	