



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Windsor Says FTA Needs Independent Scrutiny

The Independent Member for New England, Mr Tony Windsor, in Question Time yesterday requested the Prime Minister to refer the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to the Productivity Commission for in depth analysis of the net impact on Australia.

Mr Windsor said most Australians would like an independent analysis carried out so an objective judgment can be made rather than the politicised party responses that are occurring currently.

“It is essential that both the Parliament and the public have full access to the 600 page agreement as soon as possible so that correct judgment regarding the net effect of the agreement can be made.”

“This is a classic case of where those for and against are creating their own cases without reference to the fine print due to its unavailability.”

“The uncertainty has been driven by the conflicting statements of the US and Australian teams over the outcomes of various areas of the agreement.”

“These concerns are already being raised in relation to the effectiveness of single desk trading entities if restrictions are lifted on other entities from trading in the same export market and a potential move away from the current quarantine establishment procedures that would expose the Pork and Poultry industries to disease risks.”

“Another example is what implications, if any, will the ‘rules of origin’ clause for manufacturing industries have on the balance of free trade in manufactured product?”

“The rules of origin means that different tariff levels apply as the percentage of foreign componentary increases in so called Australian made products. Due to years of exposure to the global market place Australia has a smaller manufacturing base and tends to have a greater mix of sourcing in any given product than is the case for a US manufacturer.”

“The Government should agree to an independent review of the FTA to remove the uncertainty that is being driven by the possible ambiguity of the words that are being released in the absence of access to the actual document,” concluded Mr Windsor.

Hansard of question to the Prime Minister is attached.

For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02) 6761 3080

Question without Notice: Trade: Free Trade Agreement

Trade: Free Trade Agreement

[Mr WINDSOR](#) (2.31 p.m.) —My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that there are various conclusions being touted as to the net effect of the bilateral trade agreement with the United States of America, will you refer the agreement to the Productivity Commission for independent assessment? Will you guarantee that the current single-desk wheat arrangements will not change as a consequence of the agreement? Prime Minister, when will the full document be available for public scrutiny?

[Mr HOWARD](#) —I thank the member for New England. I can say immediately that his electorate will be a lot better off as a result the free trade agreement. I assume from the rather querulous character of his question that maybe he does not support it. I hope he does, because it is in the interests of the people he currently represents.

The Minister for Trade indicated yesterday, during an excellent performance on *Meet the Press*, that the government was giving attention to the question of economic analysis, and I can only repeat what the minister said on that occasion. The member asks me about the single desk. Getting rid of the single desk was not part of the negotiation and nothing in the agreement affects its operation. The text, I understand according to the experts, is being scrubbed at the present time. When the scrubbing has been finished, the pristine product will be available.

I can only say again that this remains one of the great trade achievements of this government. It is something where we have put the national interest ahead of sectional interests. I recognise the disappointment of some sectors, of which the sugar industry is an example. I expect to meet representatives of the sugar industry here in Canberra within the next couple of days, and I hope to have the opportunity of going to far North Queensland to talk to people in the industry, for whom I have both considerable empathy, great respect and a great deal of sympathy.