



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

24 June 2004

Free Trade Arrangement should not be rushed

Independent Member for New England, Mr Tony Windsor has joined with other Independent Members of the House of Representatives Peter Andren (Calare), Bob Katter (Kennedy) and Michael Organ (Cunningham), to oppose the Federal Government's attempt to push the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States of America through the House of Representatives before proper scrutiny has been applied to whether the FTA is in Australia's best interest.

"This so called 'Free' Trade Agreement should not be allowed passage into legislation before it has undergone strong scrutiny and the public should not be fooled by Government attempts at a pretence that proper scrutiny has been carried out.

"I am on record through a question to the Prime Minister in Parliament in February this year when this arrangement was first proposed, as requesting the Prime Minister to hand the agreement to the Productivity Commission for an Independent and thorough review.

"The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCoT) delivered the first attempt at a report on the FTA yesterday, yet within twenty minutes, the Government has attempted to drive the agreement through the Parliament in the next day," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor also points out that there is a Senate Committee also investigating the Free Trade Agreement.

"What has happened to the Senate inquiry due to report in mid-August?"

"This Senate inquiry is a structure put up by the parliament to allow public debate.

"How can we make an informed and responsible decision on this trade arrangement when we are ignoring the recognised means of delivered credible information as to whether a national benefit actually exists?" Mr Windsor asked.

Mr Windsor believes that the way to allay Parliamentarians concerns on the issues is relatively simple.

"The Free Trade Agreement should be investigated by the Productivity Commission.

"The Productivity Commission is the accepted body to independently review this type of agreement and the Productivity Commission should be allowed to carry out its role.

"Clearly this is not a Free Trade Agreement. The agreement lacks the broad integrity required to achieve a genuine free trade agreement. This is at best a trade arrangement and there are real questions as to whether a national benefit exists," Mr Windsor said.

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