



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

General Secretary: Brett Holmes | Assistant General Secretary: Judith Kiejda

📞 (02) 8595 1234 | 🌐 www.facebook.com/nswnma | 🐦 twitter.com/nswnma

Embargoed until 00:01, 29 September 2015

Open letter urges Trade Minister to act in good health over TPP

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has signed an open letter, urging the Federal Trade Minister Andrew Robb to defend the healthcare interests of all Australians against the vested interests of multinationals pushing the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Minister Robb has travelled to Atlanta, United States this week in the hope of finalising negotiations for the TPP, a controversial free trade agreement between 12 Pacific region countries, which could pose significant risks to the future of healthcare in Australia.

Negotiations surrounding the TPP broke down in early August, following disagreements between Japan and the US primarily around trade barriers in the automotive and agricultural industries.

However, Australia's position on Investors State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) processes and the data exclusivity period for some medicines are also believed to have contributed to the impasse.

Draft text leaked during TPP negotiations earlier in the year indicate the US has been lobbying hard for the extension of patents and data exclusivity regarding certain types of medicines.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said there are also concerns the TPP would result in Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) being increasingly influenced by pharmaceutical companies during the decision making process, the end result being higher costs of medicines for all Australians.

"Already many Australians forego important medications due to cost implications," said Mr Holmes.

"We know that when people stop taking their medications, chronic health conditions become acute placing increased pressure on the individual, their families and the overall healthcare system.

"This free trade deal must not impede on the efficiency, access and affordability of our universal healthcare system in Australia.

"All signatories on this open letter have insisted that the Trade Minister not to trade away our access to affordable medicines or our right to regulate in the interests of healthcare.

"No amount of sugar exports can compensate for the economic impact that the undermining of our healthcare system would have – if this means Australia walking away from the TPP, then so be it.

"We sincerely hope that the Trade Minister will stay true to his word and act to defend Australia's healthcare system during negotiations this week."

NB: A copy of the open letter to Trade Minister Andrew Robb is attached.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Brett Holmes, General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 550 324

Michael Whaites, Oceania Sub-regional Secretary, Public Services International +61 414 550 386