

## Don't trade Australian's health for sugar - TPP

A token increase in the quota of sugar into the United States is hardly grounds for trading off Australian access to cheaper generic medicines. Recent leaked documents of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations indicate that at the next meeting of Trade Ministers in Hawaii on July 28-31 the US will be pushing for 8-12 years data protection for biologics (the next generation of drugs). This might be good for the profits of big US pharma companies but it will make medicines more expensive for Australians.

Michael Moore, the CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has written to all Federal MPs and Australian State and Territory Health Ministers asking them to intervene in the TPP negotiations.

"Trade agreements are no longer just about opening borders and reducing tariffs so Australian sugar can be sold in the US and other TPP countries while they can sell their oranges, rice and electronics in Australia. The irony is that rather than removing protections the negotiators are now in the business of increasing protection for major companies," said Mr Moore.

The letter to Health Ministers, Senators and MPs explained the seriousness of the issue. In part:

*"This class of drugs, produced through biological processes, includes many new and emerging medicines for conditions such as cancer and rheumatoid arthritis. 'Data protection' refers to a period where the manufacturers of competing follow-on products (similar to generics) can't use the clinical trial data produced by the originator for the purpose of registering the product for sale in Australia. The US is seeking up to 12 years of data protection – seven years longer than the current period in Australia. Researchers have shown that extending monopolies on biologic drugs would cost our PBS hundreds of millions of dollars per year."*

Mr Moore added "The sugar lobby has a point – in the past the negotiators have done deals for others who farm wheat and beef to open access a little further. However, it has not been at the cost of increasing prices of medicines and restricting who will be able to access them."

American Michael Grunwald writing in Politico (<http://www.politico.com/agenda/story/2015/06/tpp-deal-leaked-pharma-000126>) says of a recent leaked chapter on intellectual property that it will "dump trillions of dollars of additional health care costs on patients, businesses and governments around the Pacific Rim" because the "draft text includes provisions that could make it extremely tough for generics to challenge brand-name pharmaceuticals abroad".

According to Mr Moore "the PHAA has included in the letters to State and Territory Ministers concerns about lack of transparency in regard to the chapters on cross-border services. We have drawn their attention to leaked text that indicates this may have implications for health services, such as restricting the ability of future governments to limit the involvement of the private sector in health service funding and provision."

Mr Moore concluded, "Trade negotiations are about trade-offs – but it should be an anathema to any government to trade the health of its citizens for goods – worse still to increase profits of multi-national conglomerates."

### For further information/comment:

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The full text of the related letter is available on the PHAA website at: [www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/644](http://www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/644)