

# Working with Australian unions on trade issues

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# The Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET)

- AFTINET is a network of 60 community organisations and unions advocating for fair trade based on human rights, labour rights and environmental sustainability
- Campaigned successfully with others in TPP countries against the TPP corporate agenda, which was not endorsed by parliament
- Campaign to keep TPP out of RCEP with similar groups in other RCEP countries, campaign against TISA
- [www.aftinet.org.au](http://www.aftinet.org.au)
- Facebook [www.facebook.com/aftinet?](http://www.facebook.com/aftinet?)



# AFTINET's work with unions

- includes 15 major national unions and union peak councils including the national ACTU, state and regional peak bodies

Have worked with unions as founding members since 2000 in the following sectors:

- Manufacturing
- Construction and mining
- Health
- Education

# Union campaigns on trade issues

AFTINET monitors and provides analyses of trade agreements which they can then use according to the interests of their members

Common concerns:

- General impacts on labour rights: global corporate production chains, race to the bottom

# Issues for specific unions

- Manufacturing and construction unions: jobs, industry development, government procurement
- Health unions: access to medicines, privatisation , deregulation of staffing arrangements and qualifications
- Education unions: defending public education, privatisation of vocational education
- General public sector and local government unions: deregulation and privatisation
- Private services unions: deregulation, staffing and qualifications and role of global corporations in aged care and childcare

# TPP campaign with health unions and public health organisations

During negotiations

- Produced a health impact study by prominent health academics and public health activists based on leaked documents which showed reduced access to medicines, higher costs, other health impacts, which received widespread media coverage and created opposition to TPP
- Nurses union used this as the basis for members education and activism, including delegates meetings, public rallies, meetings with members of Parliament

After publication of text, further analysis for a fresh round of submissions to parliamentary enquiries, member activism and

# Education unions: TPP, TiSA, RCEP

- Vocational education previously publicly provided
- Successive governments deregulated and privatised through reducing public funding and competitive tendering to private corporations
- Private corporations falsely advertised to students, failed to provide adequate courses or to complete courses and defrauded the government of millions of dollars in fees. Many private colleges collapsed, leaving students without qualifications
- In 2016 government had to re-regulate the sector to exclude bad private providers. Opposition parties want more public provision
- If TPP, TiSA or RCEP had been implemented, would have prevented

# Manufacturing and construction unions government procurement: AUSFTA, TPP

- Publicised and opposed Australia joining the WTO Government Procurement Agreement
- Worked with unions which successfully lobbied for local steel to be used in major infrastructure projects
- Worked with unions which successfully lobbied three state governments to develop policies of preference for local firms in state government procurement
- Successfully lobbied for joint parliamentary committee recommendations to change Federal government guidelines to enable preference for small and medium sized local firms

# Worked with unions to change opposition and minor parties' policies on trade

- Worked with unions to change main opposition Labor party trade policy to oppose medicine monopolies, copyright monopolies, ISDS, deregulation and privatisation of services, support local procurement policies and labour rights for temporary workers
- Achieved similar changes to Greens party policies and Nick Xenophon team party policies
- These parties have a majority in the Senate and refused to endorse the TPP implementing legislation
- There is likely to be a change of government at the 2018 election and these parties will have a majority in the Parliament