

Monday, 4 November 2019

As world's biggest trade deal nears completion, no details known to voters

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade agreement – touted as the biggest in history – is nearing completion, but no one outside the secret negotiations knows what it contains, and by the time the Australian people find out, it will be too late to make changes.

The agreement will cover almost half of the world's population, over 30 per cent of global GDP and over a quarter of world exports.

The Morrison Government continues to negotiate massive trade deals in secret, only disclosing their contents when it is too late to make changes.

Rumours suggest that this new trade deal may give monopoly rights to pharmaceutical companies in Australia, facilitate further privatisation and once again increase the number of vulnerable temporary visa workers in Australia, potentially increasing the costs of medicine and other services, while driving down wages and making it harder to find a job.

Unfortunately, due to the refusal of the Morrison Government to allow any oversight of this agreement, the Australian public will have to wait to find out what we have signed up to until it's too late to change the agreement.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

“These trade deals change people's lives and have a huge impact on the Australian economy. They should be negotiated in full view of the Australian people, not behind closed doors.

“The Morrison Government tells us to trust them to negotiate these agreements, but recent examples show that their number one priority is expanding the power of multinational companies at the expense of the jobs and living standards of Australian workers.

“This new agreement could change the accessibility of cheap medication, increase the cost of services and make it harder to get a job, especially in regional areas. There is no justification for keeping the Australian people in the dark about this.

“The Morrison Government should tell us what we are being signed up for and welcome a public debate about the merits of the agreement. Refusal to do so suggests the government knows it is selling out Australian workers. We call on the Government to immediately release the text of the agreement for public and parliamentary scrutiny.

“We call on the Morrison Government to commit to an open and transparent process for negotiating trade agreements to ensure they are in the best interests of all Australians.”

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