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94 organisations call for text of RCEP agreement to be released before signing

A group of 94 organisations from across the Asia-Pacific region, including the ACTU, have this morning written to the Morrison Government and all other governments who are party to the RCEP agreement, demanding that the text be released before the deal is signed.

The practice of signing free trade agreements without any public oversight has become common under the Morrison Government in a direct attack on the functions of our democracy.

The RCEP trade agreement will become the biggest in the world, but without access to the text of the agreement the claims the Government is making about the benefits of the agreement cannot be evaluated.

Working people in Australia are being asked to trust a Government which has repeatedly attacked the workers' rights about the impact this agreement will have on their lives and their jobs.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Trade agreements have huge effects on Australian jobs, the bare minimum that the Morrison Government should be required to do is disclose what they are signing up while there is still time to make changes to the agreement.

"The trade agreements which have recently been signed by the Morrison Government have put local jobs at risk and opened the door to the unchecked exploitation of temporary visa workers.

"RCEP could also include rights for big multinational companies to sue governments, stronger monopolies on pharmaceuticals that could delay access to cheaper medicines and deregulation of essential services

"The Morrison Government insists that these deals are great for Australia, but if they're so confident, why do they never expose them to public scrutiny?

"Australians are right to be suspicious of deals signed in secret which they are only allowed to read once they cannot be changed. This system is built to protect the interests of multi-national companies, not Australian workers."

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