

Thursday 6 May 2021

## Morrison Government continues to oppose vaccine IP waiver despite US, NZ support

Overnight, the US Government have announced they will support the proposal for the waiver on intellectual property protections for COVID-19 vaccines at the WTO.

The WTO TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement entrenches 20 year monopolies on new medicines before cheaper versions can be produced, preventing the ramping-up of production of affordable vaccine supplies. A waiver would allow any pharmaceutical manufacturer to make COVID vaccines without fear of being sued for intellectual property infringement.

The proposal for a waiver from certain provisions of the WTO TRIPS Agreement would be on the patents, trade secrets, copyright, and industrial designs aspects of the agreement for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. The waiver proposal would cover COVID-19 products including vaccines, medicines, diagnostics, and other technologies such as masks and ventilators, and would allow developing countries to expand production and access these much-needed supplies during the pandemic.

The proposal has been put forward by India and South Africa, and has been rapidly gaining support among developing countries – but Australia, the UK, EU, Switzerland, Japan, Brazil and Norway continue to withhold support for the proposal.

As it currently stands, more than 85 developing countries will not have widespread access to COVID-19 vaccines before 2023. This is unacceptable.

The ACTU and Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA petition calling on Scott Morrison to stop blocking the TRIPS waiver proposal has over 3,500 signatures (<https://www.megaphone.org.au/petitions/trips-waiver>)

### **Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:**

“This waiver is about giving developing countries the tools they need to keep their own populations safe and reduce the global spread of this virus.

“The growing COVID-19 crisis in India shows the urgent need for a ramp up of the production of vaccines to enable equitable access to end this pandemic as quickly as possible.

“The Morrison Government is brazenly putting the profit of multinational pharmaceutical companies ahead of the safety of millions of people who need medicines and vaccines.

“This Government has not only presided over a botched roll-out of the COVID vaccine in Australia, but is now preventing the widespread access to the COVID vaccine in developing countries by not supporting this waiver.

“The union movement calls on the Morrison government to urgently support the waiver proposal at the WTO.”

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