



ASSOCIATION OF SALARIED MEDICAL SPECIALISTS
TOI MATA HAUORA

Submission to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the 'Trade for All Agenda'

10 October 2018



Introduction

This submission on the Trade for All Agenda reflects one of the key policy roles of the Association of Salaried Medical Specialists (ASMS) of promoting policies which support the development and maintenance of a high quality public health service and a healthy population. It concentrates on our concerns about inadequacies in the political decision-making processes on trade agreements, including the lack of transparency and the need for an independent health impact assessment of trade agreements.

Background

The Association of Salaried Medical Specialists is the union and professional association of salaried senior doctors and dentists employed throughout New Zealand. We were formed in April 1989 to advocate and promote the common industrial and professional interests of our members and we now represent over 4,600 members, most of whom are employed by District Health Boards (DHBs) as medical and dental specialists, including physicians, surgeons, anaesthetists, psychiatrists, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists and paediatricians.

Over 90% of all DHB permanently employed senior doctors and dentists eligible to join the ASMS are in fact members. Although most of our members work in secondary and tertiary care (either as specialists or as non-vocationally registered doctors or dentists) in the public sector, a small but significant and growing number work in primary care and outside DHBs. These members, many of whom are general practitioners, are employed by the New Zealand Family Planning Association, ACC, hospices, community trusts, Iwi health authorities, union health centres and the New Zealand Blood Service.

The ASMS promotes improved health care for all New Zealanders and recognition of the professional skills and training of our members, and their important role in health care provision. We are committed to the establishment and maintenance of a high quality, professionally-led public health system throughout New Zealand.

The ASMS is an affiliate of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions.

Key principles of 'Trade for All'

We support the Trade for All principle of:

“The creation of a genuine conversation with the public and key stakeholders around the future direction of New Zealand’s trade policy; this will include consultation with Māori, consistent with their role as a Treaty partner.”

We have a record of advocating for most of the issues and policies identified as needing to be taken into account and protected when negotiating a trade agreement, including:

- the environment, including climate change
- New Zealanders’ health and wellbeing
- labour rights
- gender equity
- poverty reduction
- preserving the right of governments to regulate in the public interest, including for public services.

In addition, we support the ‘key principles of focusing “on creating new and more sustainable economic opportunities for New Zealanders of all incomes and backgrounds”; and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge. We consider these as basic elements of New Zealanders’ health and wellbeing.

However, we have difficulty reconciling many of these stated principles with the Government’s actions to date, particularly concerning its secretive negotiations and eventual signing of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) with significant concerns remaining, including the impact on New Zealanders’ health and wellbeing, the environment, labour laws, and the Government’s right to regulate, while potential economic gains remained questionable.^{i ii}

Consequently, we are far from convinced that the stated principle of “Support for trade policy to contribute to maximising the opportunities and minimising the risks associated with global issues”, including those listed above, will provide adequate protection for those issues and policies.

Fundamental changes are needed

If the Government is genuinely committed to turning around what it has acknowledged as a loss of confidence among the public for free trade agreements, radical changes are needed to the approaches and processes for negotiating such agreements. Rather than ‘minimising the risks’ to the above issues and policies, they must be at the core of New Zealand’s negotiating position. And there must be an end to agreements that intrude on the Government’s ability to regulate.

As we have said in previous submissions on free trade agreements, we believe there is a strong case for having independent health impact assessments, including the potential effects of climate change, carried out as part of the decision-making process.

If these agreements are truly in the interests of New Zealanders, there should be no issue with demonstrating that through a transparent and democratic process. Given the vital importance of these issues to New Zealanders, accountable decision-making must be a strict requirement. The process should be no different from that of developing and passing legislation, with open circulation and consultation (including reasonable time for feedback) on drafts of the text. Furthermore, given

these agreements can impede on the policy development of future New Zealand governments, ratification should be by Parliament rather than the current Executive.

We note that the Trade for All Agenda is too late to have any bearing on negotiations for the Pacific Alliance, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or renegotiation of the agreement with China.

We also note a number of organisations, including the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, It's Our Future, Doctors for Healthy Trade, and the New Zealand Nurses' Organisation will co-convene a two-day hui at the University of Auckland on 19-20 October 2018 to discuss 'What an Alternative and Progressive Trade Strategy Should Look Like'. The hui aims to achieve several goals.

- Frame the agenda for future debates to enable us to move beyond the current ad hoc interventions on specific negotiations and agreements.
- Shift current proposals to address gender, workers, indigenous rights, small business, consumer rights, human rights and environment from cosmetic adjustments, such as rhetorical exceptions and annexes to substantive and effective initiatives.
- Provide a basis for dialogue and collaboration across sectors and across parties, as part of broader thinking about ways to address the challenges confronting the country.
- Locate these localised arguments in the broader geopolitics and political economy of trade and investment negotiations.

We call on the Government to listen.

Appendix

Trade for All Key Principles

Key Principles approved by Cabinet:

- The creation of a genuine conversation with the public and key stakeholders around the future direction of New Zealand’s trade policy; this will include consultation with Māori, consistent with their role as a Treaty partner;
- A focus on creating new and more sustainable economic opportunities for New Zealanders of all incomes and backgrounds;
- Support for the international rules-based system and New Zealand’s contribution to its modernisation;
- Support for multilateral negotiations as a first-best option for New Zealand, followed by open plurilateral negotiations;
- Enhancing New Zealand’s economic integration with the Asia-Pacific region, and economic connections to other regions, including through regional and bilateral FTAs;
- Support for trade policy to contribute to maximising the opportunities and minimising the risks associated with global issues, including:
 - Environmental issues including climate change
 - Protecting New Zealanders’ health and wellbeing
 - Labour rights
 - Gender equity
 - The rights of indigenous peoples
 - SME participation in international markets
 - Inclusive regional economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable job creation
 - Protecting traditional knowledge
 - Preserving the right of governments to regulate in the public interest, including for national land markets, taxation of multinational businesses and public services
- The development of specific directives for future trade policies and negotiations to operationalise Trade for All.

ⁱ ASMS, Submission to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee on the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), 16 April 2018. Available: https://www.asms.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Submission-to-the-Foreign-Affairs-Defence-and-Trade-Committee-on-the-Comprehensive-and-Progressive-Agreement-on-Trans-Pacific-Partners_169784.2.pdf

ⁱⁱ NZCTU. Submission of the New Zealand Council of Trades Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee on the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), 18 April 2018.