

CHAFTA | Election Talking points

The CHAFTA agreement is the worst trade agreement Australia has signed onto in a generation.

Why? Because it essentially locks Australians out of jobs.

- It's an agreement that sells Australian workers and the entire country short, just so the LNP government can say they have landed an agreement. Just a few examples include, it:
 - Allows Australian workers to be locked out of work on projects (worth as little as \$150 million),
 - Allows importing of entire workforces for these projects, and their exploitation,
 - Allows workers such as electricians and motor mechanics to be imported without labour market testing or skills assessments, selling short Australian workers and putting Australian lives at risk,
 - Gives Chinese firms, including State Owned Enterprises, rights that Australian businesses don't have, in particular the right to sue our government,
 - Allows Chinese businesses to gain a competitive advantage by exploiting their workers and environment, while Australian businesses do the right thing in treating their workers and the environment decently.
- We believe we need a strong economic relationship with China. It's too important to be based on an unfair, lopsided agreement that sells Australia short.

We're calling on the ALP and Senate Cross benchers to block this agreement in Parliament and lay down some red lines that they won't let the government cross, like allowing the importation of entire workforces while local workers are left in the cold.

QUESTION: Isn't this just a protectionist union position that free trade is bad and tariffs are good?

A: It's true that we're not fans of FTAs. But we're not alone.

The Productivity Commission, the World Bank and a raft of other mainstream economists all point out that these agreements don't deliver free or fair trade or the huge economic benefits that are claimed.

They are all about preferencing one county over other and one sector over others, not about creating a fair and free playing field that really lifts competition for everyone.

But the CHAFTA is even worse than this.

This agreement includes provisions that have nothing to do with trade but everything to do with bowing to other interests for political, not economic, reasons.

The labour mobility provisions, as well as the Investment Dispute provision that lets foreign firms sue our government, put Australian workers and businesses at a huge disadvantage, just so Mr Abbott and Mr Robb can point to an achievement.

They hope Australian's won't notice the truth about this agreement but the AMWU for one isn't going to let that happen.

And the truth is this agreement isn't about a stronger relationship with China, its about better polls for the LNP.

QUESTION: If you don't support FTAs and the CHAFTA, what would the AMWU like to see in trade policy?

It's not that hard.

We'd like to see fair trade, where Australian businesses and workers compete on a level playing field with all other countries.

If we're allowed to compete on a level playing field, we know Australians can win.

But first we need a trade policy that:

- doesn't allow workers or the environment to be exploited by our competitors,
- doesn't allow foreign business to have more rights than Australian businesses,
- doesn't allow foreign workers greater access to Australian jobs that Australian workers get,
- doesn't allow imported products that fail to meet our standards, and
- supports industries, workers and regions in dealing with the impacts of increased competition and trade.

That's what we've been fighting for for years and that's what we'll keep fighting for.