

Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement threatens public health

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An editorial to be published by the scientific journal *Addiction* has been made available online, revealing that negotiations are underway behind closed doors for a far-reaching new trade and investment agreement that could tie the hands of governments' future alcohol and tobacco control policies in perpetuity.

According to editorial author Jane Kelsey, Professor of Law at the University of Auckland, the nine-country Trans-Pacific [Partnership Agreement](#) (TPPA) currently being negotiated between Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, United States and Vietnam, with Canada, Japan and Mexico in the wings, aims to set a 'gold standard' for removing barriers to the global alcohol and tobacco industries and give them greater leverage over domestic [policy decisions](#). The goal is to produce a state-of-the-art agreement that other states in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping will adopt, culminating in a Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific.

The draft TPPA text is secret, aside from chapters and background documents that have been leaked. Despite the secrecy, Kelsey says it is clear that the cumulative effect of its substantive rules and procedural requirements would shift the balance of policy-making power firmly in favour of transnational corporate interests. By ensuring that domestic alcohol and tobacco policy and regulation pose minimal impediments to global strategies, and that industry has a role in writing them, the draft TPPA threatens progressive [public health](#) policies. At its core, the TPPA threatens sovereignty and democratic governance. The problem is with

the agreement itself.

TPPA negotiations are not going forward unopposed. The American Medical Association has already called for the exclusion of measures affecting the supply, distribution, sale, advertising, promotion or investment in [tobacco products](#) and [alcoholic beverages](#) from trade agreements. Tobacco control advocates are well advanced in their campaign, bringing pressure at the national level and at the stakeholder programmes held on the margins of the formal TPPA negotiating rounds.

In Australia, The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is working with other health, medical and fair trade organisations to lobby the Australian government to ensure that it refuses investor-state dispute settlement provisions applying to Australia and that it insists that public health and access to medicines are not compromised in the developing country parties to the agreement. The PHAA has also organised discussions between public health experts and Australia's trade negotiators, written to politicians, issued press releases, and organised several public events to raise awareness in the public health community about the risks to health associated with the TPPA, including during the negotiations in Melbourne.

But Kelsey asserts that there is danger in focusing on issue silos. Beyond alcohol and tobacco are other public health concerns, such as Pharmaceutical Benefits Schemes, and beyond public health is a multitude of other negative impacts, from mining and sustainable livelihoods to indigenous rights and culture. These trade agreements represent a major public health challenge which requires action from people interested in reducing the harm from addiction and substance use around the world.

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